CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

No.15 APRIL 1985

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CRASH ZX SPECTRUM

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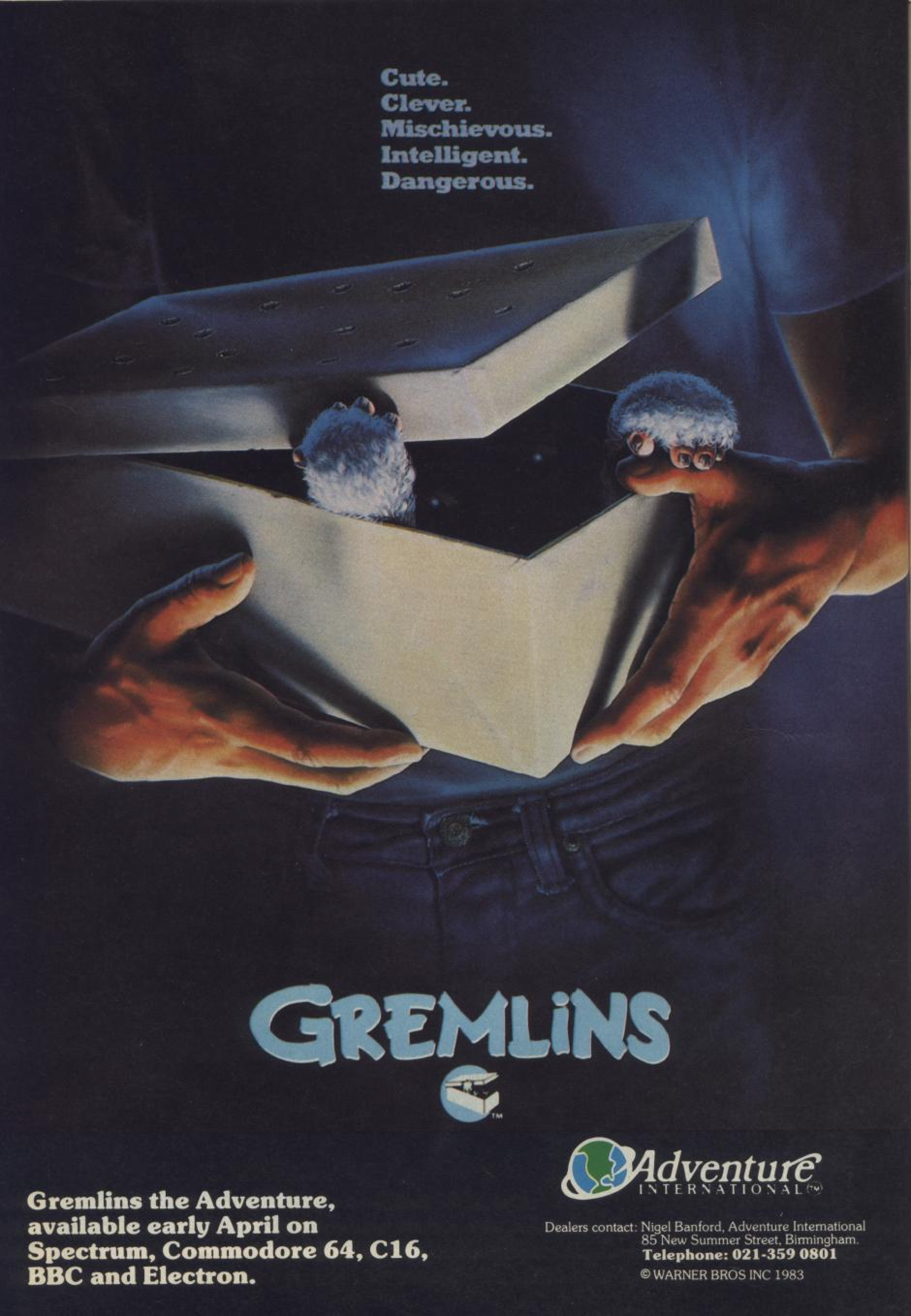
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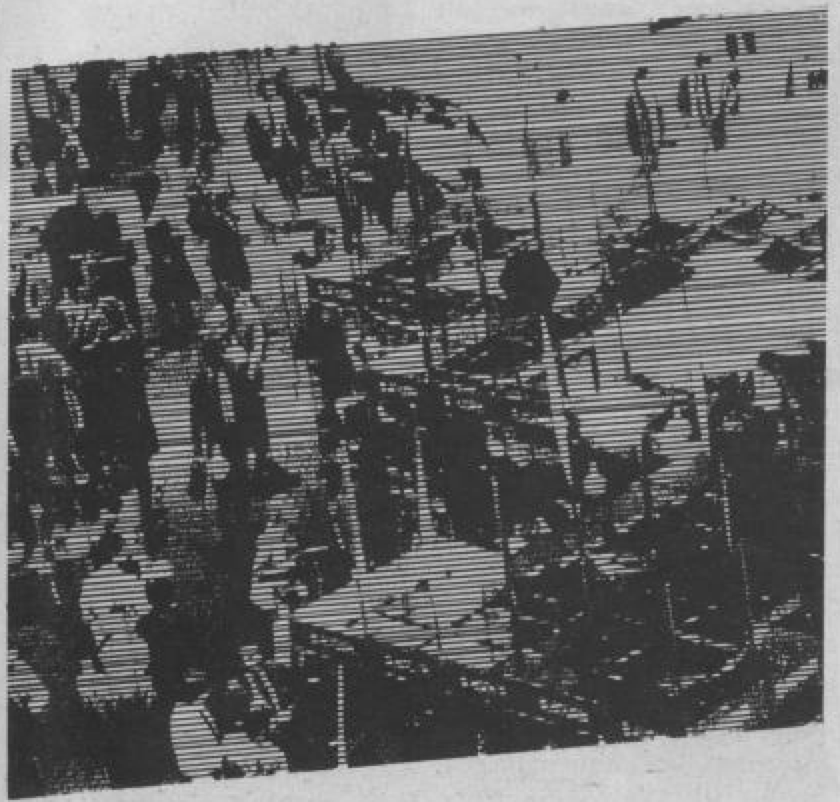
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CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION



AT THE L.E.T.

Despite the Doom and Gloom merchants among the national press and TV gloating over the troubles at Acorn, the recent Leisure Electronics Trade show at Olympia, proved that a measure of confidence still exists within the members of the home computer software industry. The show completely filled two floors at the giant Olympia 2 hall and it all proved to be very lively. As usual, the national media have tended to get it wrong. The trouble is that the press at large hate a 'bubble' (or fad if you like) to go on for too long. The computer boom was seen as a sort of skate board fad (and that never lasted), but unfortunately it went on and on. Now suddenly Acorn get into trouble and the news media's cynicism is vindicated at last - the bubble has burst, or so they think. This conveniently ignores other machines which are doing splendidly, thank you, like the Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari and the Commodore 64.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to say that there was not also an air of caution that pervading Olympia. Computer manufacturers have had a hard time recently, and so have software producers. Companies with strong product were expecting to do well, but quite a few have also been experiencing distribution and retail difficulties. I don't particularly want to get into arguments with computer retail outlets over availability of good games, because it is not the enthusiast shops which are to blame, but the giant multiple retail outlets. Many of these appear to have stocked up for Christmas with product, a lot of which isn't good enough to shift quickly, and as happened last year, they are now unwilling to buy in new games while old stock lies unsold on the shelves. This is beginning to cause an almost traditional bottleneck which throws the plans of software houses into disarray and prevents the development of new product.

It behoves the buyers of the giant retail outlets and the distributors who serve them, to have a good look at what is going on and try to sort it out a bit better.

As a consequence of this bottleneck, a number of software houses have rediscovered mail order as a way of selling their new product. While I think this is encouraging, it seems a shame that, because of inbuilt inefficiencies in the present system, shops should lose interest in the market, thus reinforcing the effects of the bottleneck.

What became apparent at the LET show, was that many software houses who had concentrated on Commodore 64 product over the Christmas period, were now turning back to Spectrum production again—proof that the Spectrum is still buoyant. Games lined up for imminent release offer further proof that Sinclair's little machine still has room for expansion both in the quality of the graphics and in the content of the ideas, and that there are thousands willing and ready to be delighted by the wonders it offers.

MORE PACKED!

This issue of CRASH sees probably more individual items than ever before. It's all part of a general expansion of the material. I hope everyone thinks that by breaking up the sections more, the magazine now offers a greater potential for information and enjoyment. In fact the art department have had a hard time fitting everything in! Two main changes are the creation of TECH NICHE, a separate column dealing with hardware, utilities and everything technical. It isn't all too big this month because of space, but it will be growing. The second is MERELY MANGRAM, a short column where Lloyd gives a sort of overview of games not actually reviewed for one reason or another and looks forward to games about to be released.

GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

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MERELY MANGRAMMERELY M

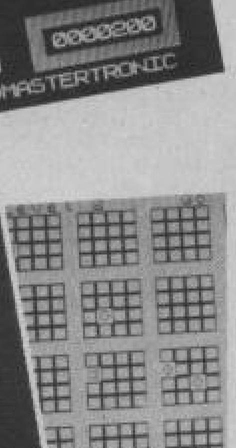
This month I start a new short column aimed at summing up the month's games and including some of those that do not get a full review in the issue for one reason or another. . . .











First off there are three recently released cassettes that will not rate a full review in CRASH because they have been reviewed before under another guise. Of the three the worthiest is the new *SOFTAID* games compilation which is being sold in aid of the Ethiopian Appeal Fund. It costs £4.99 and on side one you get the Band Aid hit single *Do they know it's Christmas* followed by *Spellbound* from **Beyond**, the 'Q-Bert' type game (reviewed CRASH July 84). From **The Edge** there is *Starbike* (CRASH November 84). The other most recent game is *Kokotoni Wilf* from **Elite** (CRASH October 84). To complete side one are two older games, *The Pyramid* from **Fantasy** (CRASH March 84) and *Horace Goes Skiing* from **Melbourne House/Psion** (pre-dates CRASH). On side two the most recent games are *Gilligan's Gold* from **Ocean** (CRASH December 84) and *3D Tank Duel* from **Realtime** (CRASH August 84). Backing up the second side are *Ant Attack* from **Quicksilva** (CRASH February 84 — issue 1), *Jack and the Beanstalk* by **Thor** (CRASH August 84) and *Sorcery* from **Virgin Games**. The excellent inlay gives a quick objectives rundown on each game and a tape counter setting so you can fast-forward to the title you want. Sounds like excellent value and all in a good cause as well!

The next two offerings are both from **Mastertronic** in their 199 range and both are re-releases. First, *Wizards Warriors*. This came out before CRASH existed, but was well reviewed in the CRASH Mail Order catalogue of the time. Basically a copy of the arcade original, you have to enter the crypts of the Wizard and defeat his minions. The various nasties behave differently and have different firing powers and habits. If you do really well, the angered Wizard might appear himself (although often he's invisible except on the radar screen). **Abersoft** released this game originally, and at the time it was pretty good, with smooth machine code graphics to make a tough arcade game. It's well worth another look at the new low price, especially for Spectrum games historians.

The second offering is not so brilliant, a re-release of the **Spirit Software** road racer game *Formula 1* (CRASH September 84). Apart from the price change the main difference between this and the original is that you are no longer supplied with the 'yellow ashtray' steering wheel, instead the inlay suggests the use of a 'sellotape tin' lid! Although I have had letters from readers saying they enjoyed the game, I would still suggest that it's pretty useless as a road racer. Interestingly enough, the next development of road racer games may well be the one **Leisure Genius** are currently planning, a licenced computer version of Scalextric! From what little I've heard, it sounds like fun; the two players will not only have a top view of the track they have created, but also their own 3D eyelevel view.

One game we never got around to reviewing properly is another of the 'Track and Field' type games, this one from a software house called **Century City**. The game is *Olympic Challenge* and it offers the now traditional range of events, namely the 100m, 400m and 1500m as well as the shot putt, discus, javelin, long jump, high jump, pole vault and 110m hurdles. There have been so many variations on this theme that it has to be a good one to score now. *Olympic Challenge* lacks in most departments; graphically it is poor with an unconvincing stick figure and stilted animation. Chris Passey will be passing more detailed comment on next month in our giant Sports Roundup.

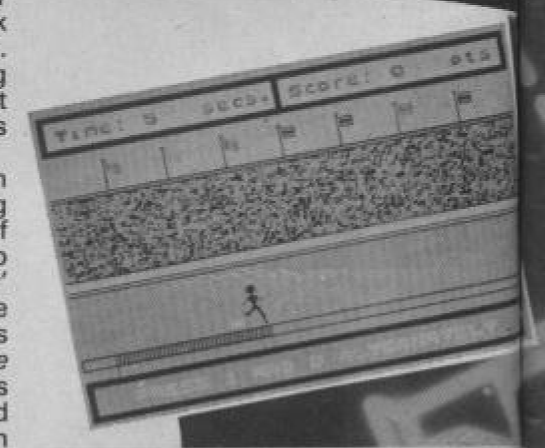
There seem to have been quite a few programs coming out recently from all sorts of software houses that tend to resemble some of the 'parlour' games that were popular on the ZX81 and early Spectrum. This next one is typical, *M-Ultimate* from **Britannia Software**. This is a 3D noughts & crosses played on a grid of boxes 4 by 4, each box being a grid of 4 by 4. The player fights it out with the computer on three skill levels with a choice of going first or second. The player selects the square to fill next by moving a white cursor on an awkward set of keys (Z/X for up/down and N/M for left/right). As usual, winning lines can be on any one small grid, or scattered throughout the 3D whole, as long as the lines are straight! *M-Ultimate isn't the most exciting version I've ever seen, but it plays a mean enough game on the higher levels and is reasonably friendly to use.*

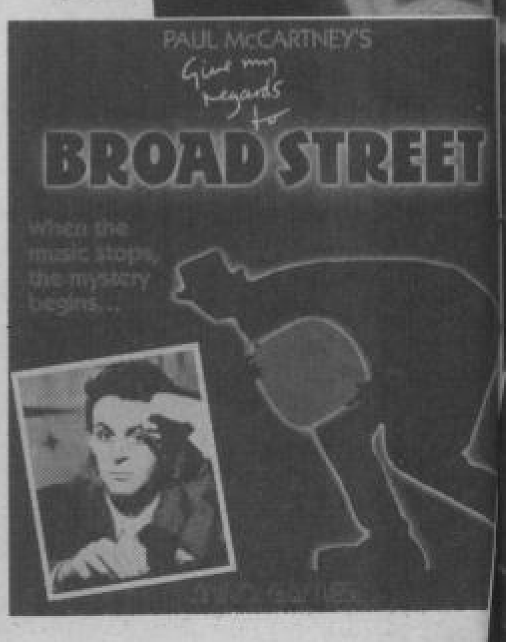
Onto some goodies to look forward to next month!

We're running competitions this month for both Broad Street and *Rocky Horror Show*. The first is from **Argus Press Software** and is based on Paul McCartney's movie 'Give my Regards to Broad Street'. You play the part of the ex-Beatle searching for the members of his band all over the London Underground system. I haven't seen the Spectrum version yet, but the graphics look good and the game idea is novel, involving a drive round the streets of









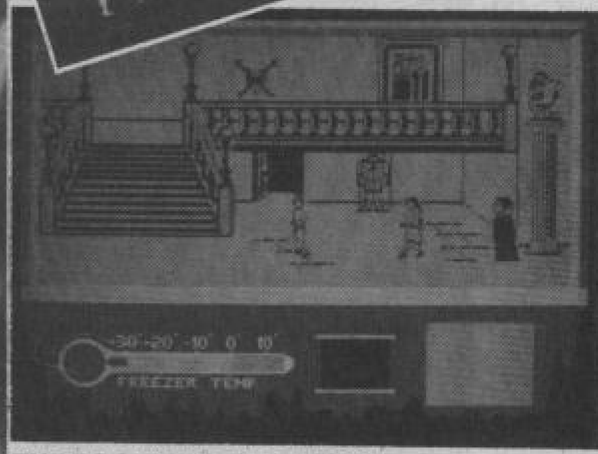


The cover artwork for STARION — a mind-blowing game from Melbourne House









THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW





London using a road map supplied. The packaging is excellent and the game promises much fun. We'll see next month in the full review.

Rocky Horror Show was the great seventies cult stage musical (it was filmed as well) and stars two mid-American teenage innocents (Brad and Janet) who get trapped in a B movie horror house when their car breaks down. The music was great. Now **CRL** are about to release a computer game version which includes marvellous graphics based firmly on the film. The characters are well animated, using black line graphics on a single colour background. You can play either Brad or Janet in this non-sexist graphical adventure (no text input). As the CRL blurb says, there are lotsa larfs, transylvanian parties, thrills and chills, romance with gorgeous gals or hunky guys. It isn't easy having a good time, says ace-villain Frank N'Furter, but the game may prove him wrong.

Another important game which arrived just too late for a proper review is **Hewson Consultant**'s *Dragon Torc of Avalon*. The plot is set in a time a few years after *Avalon*. Morag the Shapeshifter, Witch Queen of the North, has gained one of the five crowns of Britain and threatens to gather the others from which she will remake the magical Dragontorc and become all powerful. Once again you play the astral projection of Maroc in a quest to rescue his old tutor Merlyn, held captive by Marog. A lot of the action takes place outside in this new game and there is much more interaction between the computer controlled characters and Maroc (see Robin Candy's Playing Tips section). Once again, the graphics are atmospheric and the game is joystick driven. The player starts off with a few more spells this time and author **Steve Turner** has done some pretty mean hiding of the others.

DK'Tronics sent us a very early preview copy of their new graphics adventure based on the popular TV series 'Minder'. In *Minder* you play Arthur Daley and the object is to maintain his dishonourable tradition of making enough money to support a flamboyant life-style without doing any work. The game starts at Arthur's home, a great mystery that contains 'er indoors. There's the Lock Up under the railway arch, Terry's flat (Terry can be unsociable if you visit him at the wrong times of day), the Winchester Club and many other locations. *Minder* is a strategical graphics adventure with loads of interactive characters all trying to buy or sell you something. You are given just a fortnight to keep yourself in ready cash. With adventures it's often a question of choosing the right words — with *Minder* the right adjectives to describe the rubbish you're trying to sell a character are all important. It sounds like involved fun.

Melbourne House are also about to release a major game called *Starion*. It's described as a multi-dimensional 243-zone space--time simulation requiring reflex skills, analytical powers, stamina and a keen sense of adventure (which rules me out)! The year is 2010 and your name is Starion, brightest graduate of the Space Academy. You have been selected to pilot the SS Stardate and go back in time to correct devastation wrought in the space-time continuum by evil aliens. The idea is that aliens have been removing items of historical significance from their correct time zone to one another of the eight local time zones. You must engage and destroy the enemy time ships. The dead alien's illegal cargo will then materialise in the form of an alphabetical letter. Having collected all the letters you will have to unscramble them, decide what the item is, and then fly through the time warp to the correct time zone to replace it. The arcade elements are numerous, and some sense of history will also be useful! The author is **David Webb**, a 19-year old undergraduate in Mathematics at Oxford University. He has written two books previously for Melbourne House. More on *Starion* next month.

That just leaves two items. First, **Elite** are about to launch their new game *Grand National* which is officially endorsed by the Aintree race Course Company. The player becomes the jockey, with the task of not only completing the 30-fence Aintree course, but also of selecting a particular horse to ride. In the first of three sections a race report for the current form of 40 horses is given, and bets can be placed on runners. The player then selects his horse. In the second section the race is run and allows the player to monitor the horse from an overhead or side view, steering the reins, cracking the whip (to increase speed) and jumping fences. The third section is a race report where the player can build up a record and go for the final award. *Grand National* should be out now, price £6.95.

Second, **Beyond** should be releasing the latest offering from the **Denton Designs** team called *Shadowfire*. All we have at the moment is a mock-up of the excellent packaging. Beyond say this icon-driven graphical adventure is involved and complex, but if it isn't yet released by the time the next issue goes to press, we hope to bring you a better idea of the game and some playing tips.

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CHILLER

Producer: **Mastertronic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Richard Wright**

The plot behind *Chiller* is very similar to the Michael Jackson video *Thriller*, at least the scenes are the same they're just presented in a slightly different sequence. The action starts in the forest, rather than in the cinema, and then moves to the cinema, the ghetto, the graveyard and the shack (well actually it's a mansion now). That's about as far as the similarity goes, well it would be very hard to design a game in which the player had to run about singing, dancing and generally pulling funny faces at the local population. *Chiller* still has a touch of the old Hollywood horror film, boy meets girl, boy loses girl to the gremlins, boy (this is your bit now) sets off to rescue his girl before it's too late

Essentially *Chiller* is a platform game played over five screens. You start off in the forest and your task is to collect all of the crosses that are scattered around while avoiding contact with any of the ghouls, and that includes just about anything that moves. Should you collide then your energy, shown on a bar line, will decrease. You only have one life so it's important to keep your energy levels high and this is done by eating mushrooms (be careful not to eat the purple ones — not only do they look rather unpleasant but they actually make you ill).

After you have collected the crosses you can move to the next screen but on every screen the task is the same, collect the crosses, eat the mushrooms and avoid the ghouls. If you escape from the forest you must work your way through the next four screens before you have any chance of rescuing your girl. She has rather stupidly taken up a position on the roof of the Mansion. After you have collected the objects and climbed up to meet her you could be forgiven for expecting a break, sorry, no Hollywood happy endings here. You must escape and go through it all again if you want to get home safely.

Points are allocated according to the number of crosses you collect. This is rather curious since there is also a scoreboard which shows how many crosses you have collected. Of course the one glaring omission is the *Thriller* music, but that's all history now since the row about its use on the CBM64 version.

CRITICISM

● '*Chiller* is a pretty good CBM64 to Spectrum conversion but seeing as the game's pretty boring anyway, it wasn't really worth it. The graphics are small but okay for what they have to do, on the other hand they aren't really acceptable when you see the standard of some of the graphics produced today. there is a sound on/off button but virtually no sound to turn off. *Chiller* is quite playable for a while but soon becomes totally and utterly boring and I wanted to switch it off five minutes after loading it. I'd rather pay more for a good game than £1.99 for this rubbish.'



Just around midnight the howling begins, but despite some jolly looking graphics CHILLER has little thriller in it

● *'Chiller has some odd-sized graphics; some are very large and some are tiny and not of relative size to each other. Nevertheless, most of them are drawn quite nicely and it looks colourful. The game has a very strange character — 'you' are meant to rescue your beloved but oddly enough, when you arrive she has also been possessed by evil spirits, so you have to run all the way back through the scenes again. When you analyse this, there doesn't seem much point to the game, to try and rescue someone you already know is possessed by evil spirits. But then again, I suppose you get what you pay for — a poor plot. I found moving about the screens quite difficult, the control keys were also possessed by evil spirits and didn't respond too well. The only reason why I could recommend this game is for its price — it has no real other qualities.'*

● '*Chiller* actually looks rather good at first glance, with jolly graphics. But this impression only survives a few moments once you actually start playing. The game content is poor, the controls are sticky and the overall objective is not sufficiently exciting enough to hold the attention for more than a few minutes.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q,W,E,R,T/Y,U,I,O,P left/right, H to ENTER to jump
Joystick: Kempston, Fuller, Cursor type, Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: above average
Sound: can be toggled on/off but poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives: Only one life available but energy extendable throughout game
Screens: 5
General rating: looks like there's a lot going on, but in the end lacking lasting appeal.

Use of computer	**61%**
Graphics	**50%**
Playability	**31%**
Getting started	**67%**
Addictive qualities	**15%**
Value for money	**65%**
Overall	**42%**

HOW THE RATINGS WORK

IMPORTANT CHANGE!!!

After more than a year of maintaining the CRASH rating system, we have made one important alteration. The **OVERALL** rating is **no longer calculated as a strict average of the previous 6 ratings.** Now each reviewer is independently allowed to judge the Overall worth of a game as a **separate rating**. We hope this will help overcome some of the inconsistencies which readers have noted in the past.

OVERALL PERCENTAGE is now a separate and distinct rating. ALL ratings are an average of three reviewers' opinions.

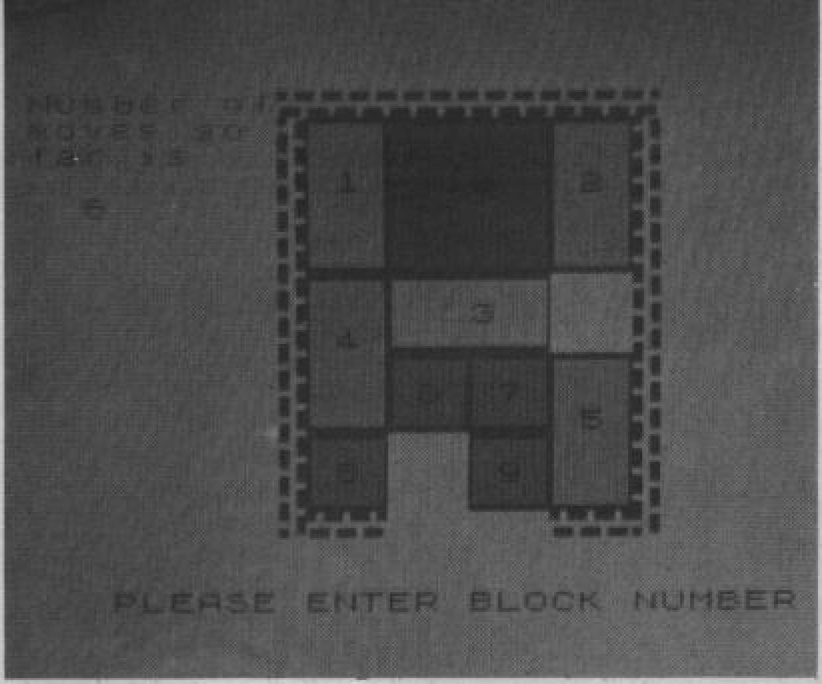
Under 30% — a waste of time
31-40% — generally poor but may appeal to some
41-50% — below average to average
51-55% — reasonable average if game type enjoyed
56-60% — above average to good
61-70% — good on most counts, generally recommended
71-80% — very good, recommended
81-89% — excellent
Above 90% — a CRASH Smash, words fail. . . .

THE THINKER

Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**

The Thinker is a sliding block puzzle but comes complete with a warning from the publisher, 'If you value your sanity, don't buy this game it makes Rubik's Cube look simple'. Having failed to crack Rubik's Cube, my front door AND *The Thinker*, I really don't feel qualified to make comparisons.

On loading, the user is asked to select a level of difficulty from 1 to 5. After you have answered the promt the game board is drawn. You are confronted with a large square outline, at the bottom of which there is a gap about two thirds the width of the square's side. The gap corresponds to the smaller red square positioned at the back of the box which in turn is surrounded by nine other blocks of different sizes and colours, each block being numbered. The object of the puzzle is to move the red block out to the front of the box, but to do this the other blocks have to be



Getting the red square out from the back is the brain-teasing puzzle here

rearranged, within the confines of the box, to allow the red block free passage. Sounds easy.

To move any of the blocks simply requires the user to input the number of the target block and then, by using the cursor keys, to show where you would like it moved to. Should you make an illegal move then you will receive the first of three warnings, persist and you are in for a nasty but witty shock.

Should you fail to crack *The Thinker* then you will be able to write to the publishers for the solution. I can confidently predict that Atlantis will be getting some extra post.

CRITICISM

● 'It's always a bit difficult to know what sort of criteria to use in commenting on a game like this. Certainly the computer is ideally suited to this type of puzzle game, and in the end people who enjoy difficult puzzles will no doubt enjoy this as a computer game. A big advantage is the price, which makes it well affordable even if you are not sure whether you will like it or not. Graphically it is unexciting, as you might expect, but the moving routine is friendly enough and the puzzle provided is a great deal harder than it looks at first glance. I'm still trying.'

● 'The Thinker *is a slight advance on the plastic slide puzzles you had when you were little kids, the only difference being that the blocks are not just square, they are all different shapes and sizes and very difficult to move about in the right order. One thing that irritated me was the beeping, buzzing and chirping — it got on my nerves and wasn't conducive to thinking; and it slowed the game up considerably. Apart from that I found the game enjoyable, which is most unusual for me. I don't know whether it is more difficult than Rubik's Cube, but with only one face instead of six I think it must be easier, although the time limit can become quite drastic.'*

'How, you may ask, can you have a level of difficulty with a program like this? It's all rather cunning, should you be foolish enough to select the hardest level, five, you are allowed very little time to decide on your move, if you take too long then the computer will force a move on you, but it will be a bad one. At the highest level your time expires after about 8 seconds, level 2, the lowest, allows you plenty of time. Since this puzzle is hard to solve at any speed (until you've done it once of course) I can't quite see the point of a time limit at all. Still, it proves to be quite a brain-teaser and therefore worth it if you like this sort of thing.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors and zero to 9 (the red block number 10 is actually zero)
Joystick: cursor type
Keyboard play: simple enough and responsive
Use of colour: very simple
Graphics: very simple
Sound: loads of entry beeps etc
Skill levels: 5
General rating: a tough puzzle.

Use of computer	N/A
Graphics	N/A
Playability	68%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	79%
Overall	**79%**

SAM STOAT (Safe-breaker)

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**

More alliterative arcade adventure from Gremlin. In this one you play Sam Stoat, a cunning cat-burglar (or stoat-burglar if you prefer). The object is to enter one of the four houses on the start screen (house 1 easy, house 4 hard), then locate the bomb and the match to blow the safe, and escape. Escape is only possible if you have collected the diamond necklace carelessly left lying around on the floor. On finding the bomb it will follow you around. Points are awarded for picking up any other valuables you may come across.

Each house has a series of rooms interlinked with each other, but as usual there is a lot of nightlife in them, vicious gnomes, drunks, bouncing bed springs, spiders, bats and more. These tend to eat away his energy, indicated at the bottom of the screen by a 'Bloodometer', but it can be replenished by finding Stoat Healing Elixir.

Once the diamond has been collected, Sam can leave the house through the mousehole, which turns out to be a large lake with five pillars standing in it. The three middle ones rise and fall in a rhythym which makes leaping from one to the other rather difficult. Falling into the water is fatal of course. The game is played over 80 screens, twenty per house.

CRITICISM

● '*Sam Stoat* starts off after a heart-warming rendition of the 'Z Cars' TV theme. Remember that, no, good, because neither do I. The game is typical in layout to the recent Gremlin productions. I found the graphics okay but some of the moving characters, including Sam, were a little cumbersome. For some odd reason mouse holes were connected by separately rising pillars in a watery environment. As a game *Sam Stoat* was quite good, but the houses were not all that big (Barrat obviously). Gremlin, in my humble opinion, don't seem to have captured the appeal of their original Monty. But all in all *Sam* is a good game, pretty playable, but I have doubts as to its addictive qualities.'

● *'Gremlin Graphics seem to be pursuing this animal-starring series. The character this time has turned to crime for his thrills and spills — if you always fancied yourself as a bit of a burglar then now's your chance.* Safebreaker *must be one of Gremlin's most difficult games yet, not in the game itself but in the link screen (the mousehole connection). where you have to jump over*

Sam has found the bomb inside a room in one of the houses. The bomb will follow wherever he goes.



rising and falling columns — good timing is a MUST — and it does become frustrating after a while when you cannot get over the river and continue with the game. I'd even go as far as to say that it would be much better to make this part of the game easier and make the rest of the game more difficult. There doesn't seem to be much content to this game unless I've missed something, you don't really even have to avoid the characters inside the houses as they do nothing more than slow you down. One major attraction is the detailed graphics; tomato plants and flower pots are wonderfully drawn, as are all the playing characters, each being individually animated. Gremlin don't seem to be producing games of as high a quality as Monty Mole *— yes they've got the graphics right, but there's little game in it.'*

● 'I'm not quite sure what the 'Bloodometer' is for in this game, unless there is some equation being made about Stoats and blood. Is Sam a vampire? Or is he a heroin addict? Sam, of course, is the character who rescued Monty in *Monty is Innocent*, and now we know why he is familiar with the insides of a prison — he's obviously been nabbed before! The graphics here are far better than in the previous game, much cleaner looking and far more interesting, they are exceptionally well animated too. *Sam Stoat* is a more involving and difficult game than *Monty is Innocent*, but most of the difficulty seems to come from the mouse hole leaping bit rather than the main game, and this form of connection is vital to get to all the other rooms in the house. I get the feeling that what is happening now is that game need games designers as well as programmers — they are not necessarily the same thing at all. Good, well animated graphics and a simple sort of idea longer holds the lasting appeal necessary to a great game, and this seems to me to be true of *Sam Stoat Safebreaker*. The game looks good, but is not, I think, very addictive.'





Sam Stoat, swag bag on his back, encounters a few nasties. He could always pop into one of the two mouseholes. . . .

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W left/right, P/L up/down (L is not mentioned on the inlay) B to SPACE to jump or enter a house
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2
Keyboard play: simple layout and responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: very good, some excellent animation and drawing
Sound: good start tune, lacking in spot effects
Skill levels: 4 selectable by house choice
Lives: it says 4 on the inlay, but this seems a little silly as you have one life and an energy (Bloodometer) level
Screens: 80
General rating: above average to good.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	74%
Playability	64%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	51%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**68%**

VIDEO POOL

Producer: **OCP**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **James Hutchby**

Here is yet another pool simulation program complete with the features that we have come to expect. In essence all that's required to win is to pot the five numbered balls on the table without losing any lives.

To make a shot one simply steers a cursor around the cushion and when it is in line with the cue ball and in the direction necessary for the shot the player then holds down the space key until the required level of power (shown on a bar indicator) is reached. Releasing the space key makes the shot. Scoring for pool can be pretty complicated. Here the points are calculated as a multiple of the frame number, the ball number, the pocket value all multiplied by ten. The shot must be potted before the end of the shot count, if you fail to pot a ball after 5 shots then you will lose three of your lives. You will also lose a life if you pot the cue ball or miss a ball altogether. Higher skill levels are achieved by reducing the time allowed to make a shot, using smaller pockets and reducing the number of attempts available to make a shot.

The menu allows selection of a two-player game. In this mode each player has a unique set of balls. A special mode allows the selection of two versions of the standard game, the first of which requires that the balls are potted in numeric order. The second and hardest of the variations is the game in which the player has to pot the balls into the pockets bearing the same numbers.

The package has a mode referred to as 'Table editor' which allows you to set up a table with the balls in any position so you can practice those hard-to-get shots.

CRITICISM

● '*Video Pool* gets off to an excellent start with an extremely classy title sequence — we are talking smooth with a capital S. The game itself is a typical enough pool game. It has several variations and an editor for setting up trick shots. Hands up all of you who can pot the lot in one shot! The graphics are smooth but not very colourful — attribute problems would have occured if they were, so perhaps they're best left. *Video Pool* is as good as most other pool programs on the market.'

● *'The graphics are certainly very impressive, although pool should look a bit brighter, but the balls are large and move very smoothly indeed. I liked the difficulty level selections like choosing between the size of pockets on the table. Shot selection and taking is simply done and reasonably fast to accomplish. There are quite a few billiard snooker pool programs available now, and this is certainly among the best.'*

COMMENTS

control keys: user definable, preset M/SS left/right Space to shoot
Joystick: Sinclair 2, Kempston, Cursor type
Keyboard play: good response, movement of cursor initially confusing
Use of colour: sensible rather than exciting
Graphics: excellent action, very smooth indeed
Sound: very little sound
Skill levels: 3
Lives: 5 per frame
Screens: single screen action
General rating: an enjoyable game but apart from the smooth graphics this is a fairly standard version

Use of computer	77%
Graphics	69%
Playability	68%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**69%**

A·L·I·E·N 8



A CRASH Smash

ALIEN 8

Producer: **Ultimate**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**

Alien 8 was perhaps the most long-awaited game from Ultimate from the time of its first appearance as an advert. Due to the time scale it just missed review in last month's issue, so by now probably most fans will know all about the game and this review will be redundant. But perhaps not. Has *Alien 8* caused another controversy? It looks just like *Knight Lore* a lot of people exclaimed, feeling obscurely ripped off. Now read, after the event (!), what the CRASH team thought of *Alien 8*.

But first, a brief word about the game. Indubitably, the graphics style is identical to that developed for *Knight Lore*, with the solid looking 3D graphics. Again, objects can be manipulated in a variety of ways to make life easier for Alien 8, a cute little robot who thinks in 8 directions but moves in four. As Alien 8 (making his first appearance in this month's Adventures of Jetman), you are aboard a starship which is slowing for its long-waited rendez-vous. The ship is full of rooms some containing cryogenically frozen beings. The object is to restore life to this chilly people before the time limit for arrival runs out. Life of course would be mechanically simple, were it not for the varied aliens penetrating the ship's defences. On top of that you must locate replacement packs for the robot, and work out what helps you to do what and when.

The rooms are necessarily more space ship-like than those in the dungeons of *Knight Lore*, but again blocks and pedestals are piled up in puzzling configurations, often hiding unpleasant spikes and pyramids. Some blocks move under their own power, others may be moved, and many dissolve on their being touched. As the light years tick away to zero, the pace becomes hectic...

CRITICISM

● 'It's here and they've done it again. *Alien 8* is, in its basic design, rather similar to *Knight Lore*. On more observation I felt it would be Knight Lore in space, but after playing for a bit this was proved very wrong. It was much more than this. In fact

Alien 8 encounters a 'Moulek' or a 'Douse' or something, in a room of unfriendly blocks



A8 is A1. The game is really challenging and has plenty of features and tests. lateral thinking as well as arcade reflexes are required. The hero, Alien 8 the robot, has a personality due to his style of movement and actions. This space craft seems to be mouse ridden; perhaps Sabre Wulf could have some casual employment here; it contains clockwork mice and things I've christened 'moul-eks' — half mouse, half Dalek. A useful piece of equipment to find is a compass stand which, when stood upon, controls the multi-directional robots — great for mine clearing. The support valves come in useful as a jumping platform now and again (it didn't seem to impair their ability to function when inserted in the socket). Overall *Alien 8* is excellent and a worthy smash. I'm pleased to see the greater combination of thought and reflexes that this adds to the computer game. Congratulations Ultimate, again. For those who may moan that this is too similar to *Knight Lore*, well let them moan as they probably couldn't do better. There will many more who do appreciate it. I do for one!'

● 'Alien 8 *looks like and plays like* Knight Lore *but the game is a bit of an advancement over the former game. The graphics are excellent and the sound is good too. Despite the similarity of idea, I think of the two I prefer* Alien 8 *as it seems a bit more playable. The game features quite a few nice touches such as the robot thing you can control when your character is standing on the cursor pods. An excellent game.'*

●'Many people will regard this game as having only a slight difference to *Knight Lore*. I cannot agree. For a start the graphics are more imaginative and pleasing. There seems to be more structure to the game, it is not so easy to just wander about, and you actually have to do things, collecting objects in order to gain access to other parts of the space ship as well as avoiding meanies and traps that are placed around the ship. The graphics are well up to Ultimate's usual standard, if not better; they are clear and well designed with continuous variation throughout. I am pleased to see that Ultimate have included a time feature urging you on to race through the game. *Alien 8* is compelling and and exciting to play but does pose many strategic and thinking problems as well as arcade action. No doubt this will be another winner for Ultimate. I wonder what their next game will be. . . ?'

COMMENTS

Control keys: alternate bottom row keys left/right, A,S,D,F to move forward, Q, W,E,R to jump, top row to pick up/drop
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2, Cursor type
Keyboard play: the various key options are easy to use and response is very finely tuned
Use of colour: the single colour per room allows for good line graphics
Graphics: excellent, varied, characterful and very smooth

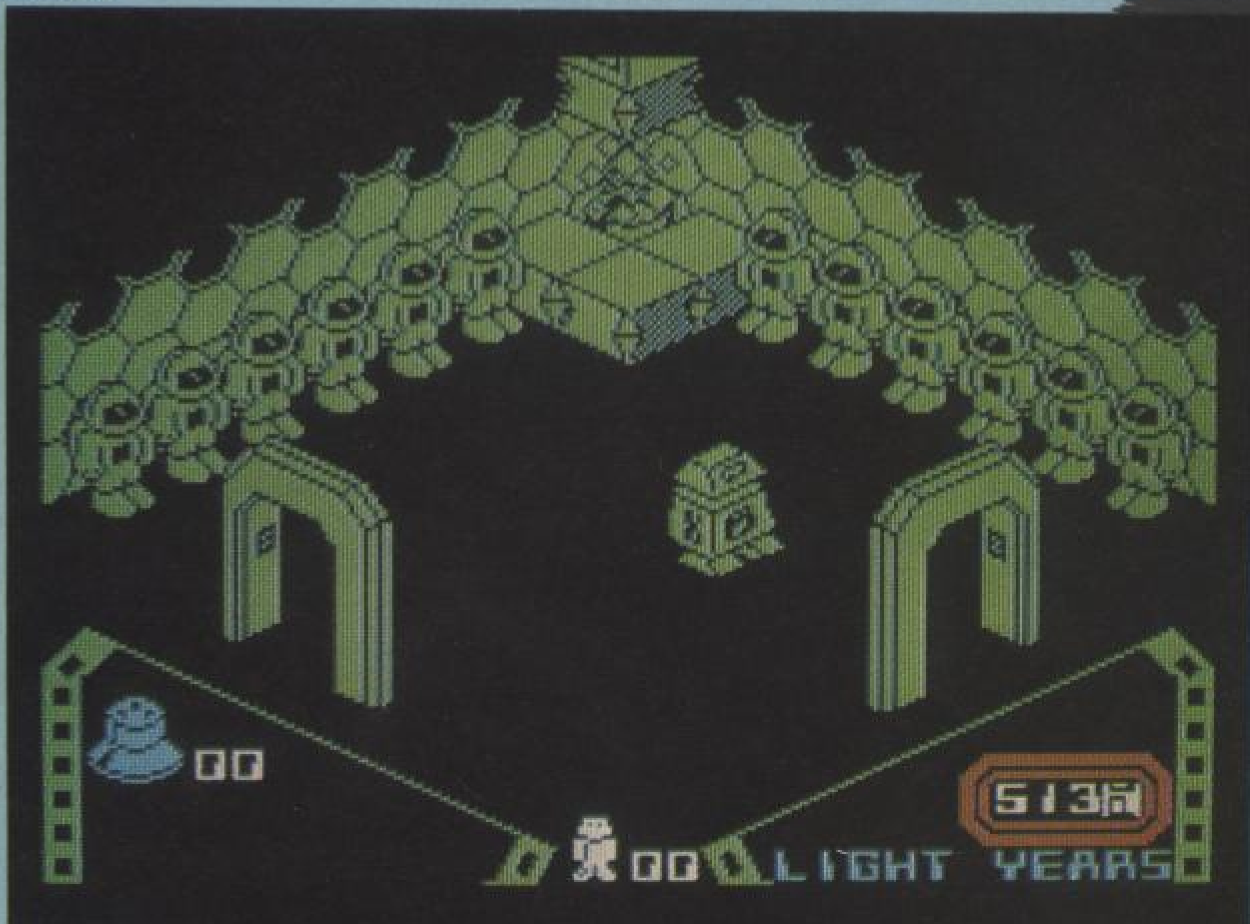


Alien 8 gets the treatment ready for another game

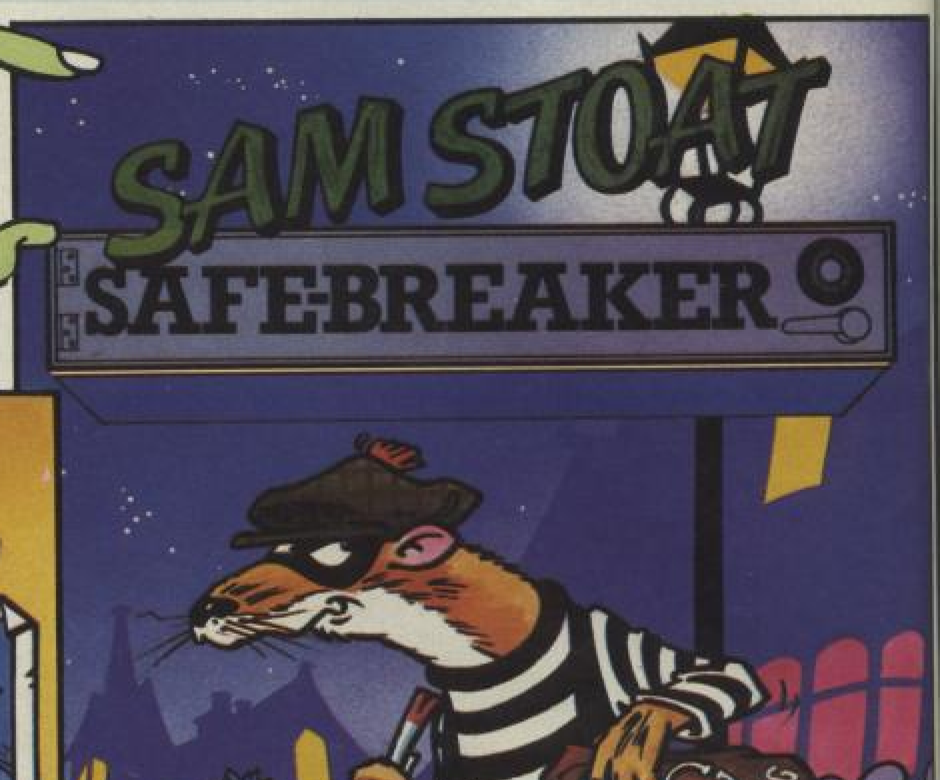
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: 129
General rating: agreement that this is a slightly better game in most respects than *Knight Lore*, and therefore generally excellent.

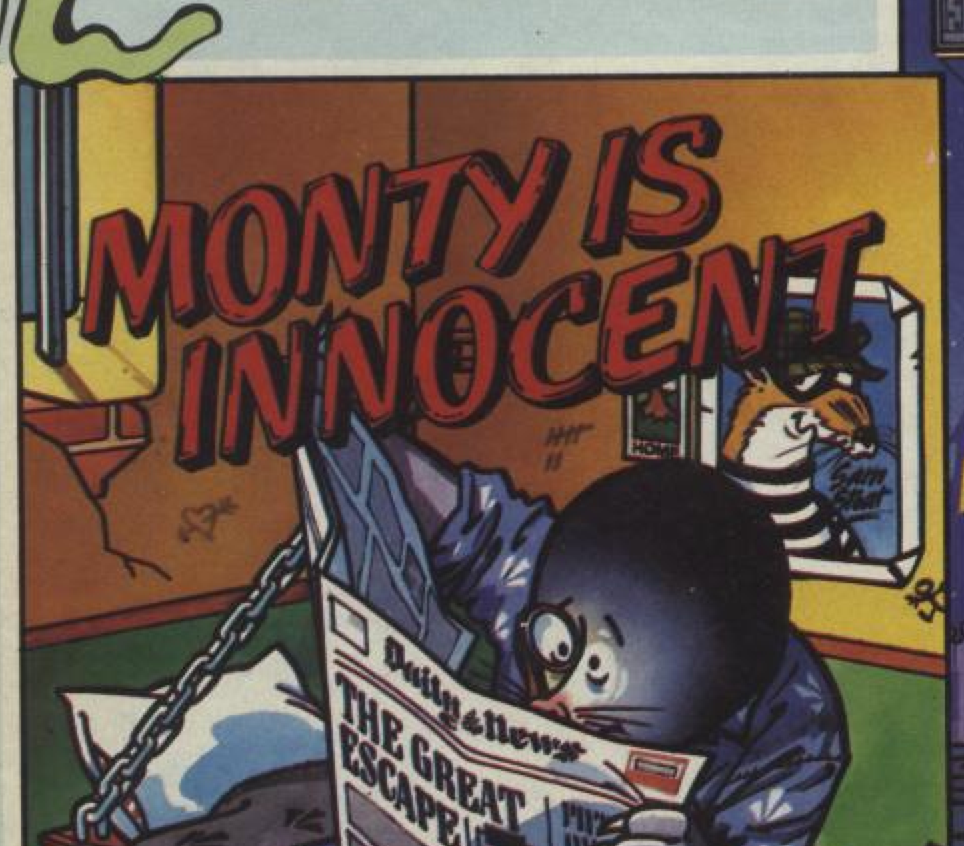
Use of computer	93%
Graphics	98%
Playability	96%
Getting started	91%
Addictive qualities	97%
Value for money	93%
Overall	**95%**

It may look like Knight Lore but it plays differently









At the dead of night Sam leaves his lair and makes for the large houses where, with the aid of some everyday tools and a good measure of cunning, there are wealth and riches for his delight (not to mention his pocket). It couldn't be easier. . . sneak into the house, find the safe; light the blue touch paper and stand well back. Then out into the night with the ill-gotten gains! But Sam has reckoned without one or two adversaries who are more than a little determined to get the better of him. . .

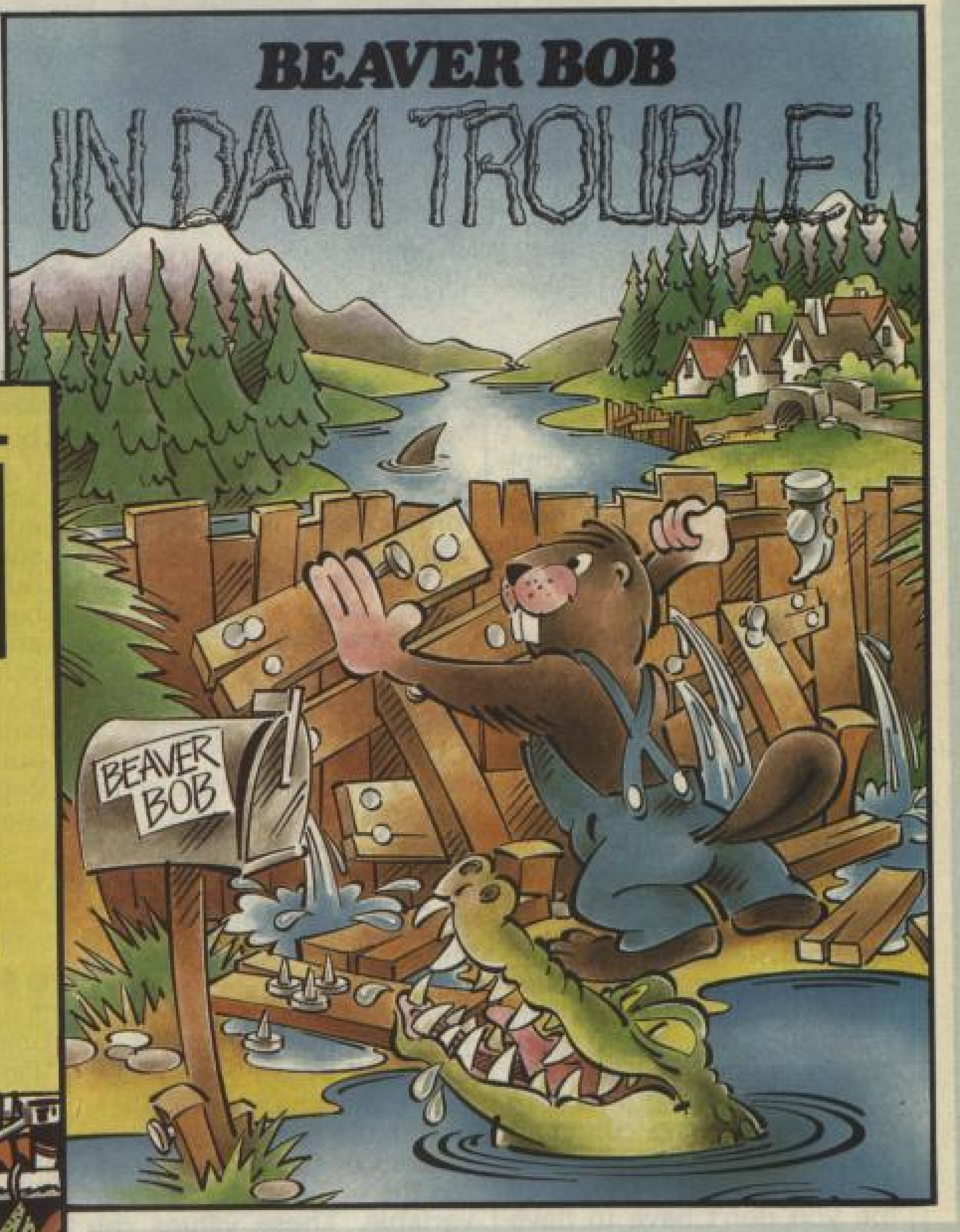
A cry of national outrage! Poor Monty banished for life amongst murderers, arsonists, the lowest of the low. Fear not, this Mole is innocent, and plans are in hand to rescue your Superhero. Who is the mysterious masked rodent willing to challenge death for his lifelong friend? What are the evil forces working in Scudmore Prison?

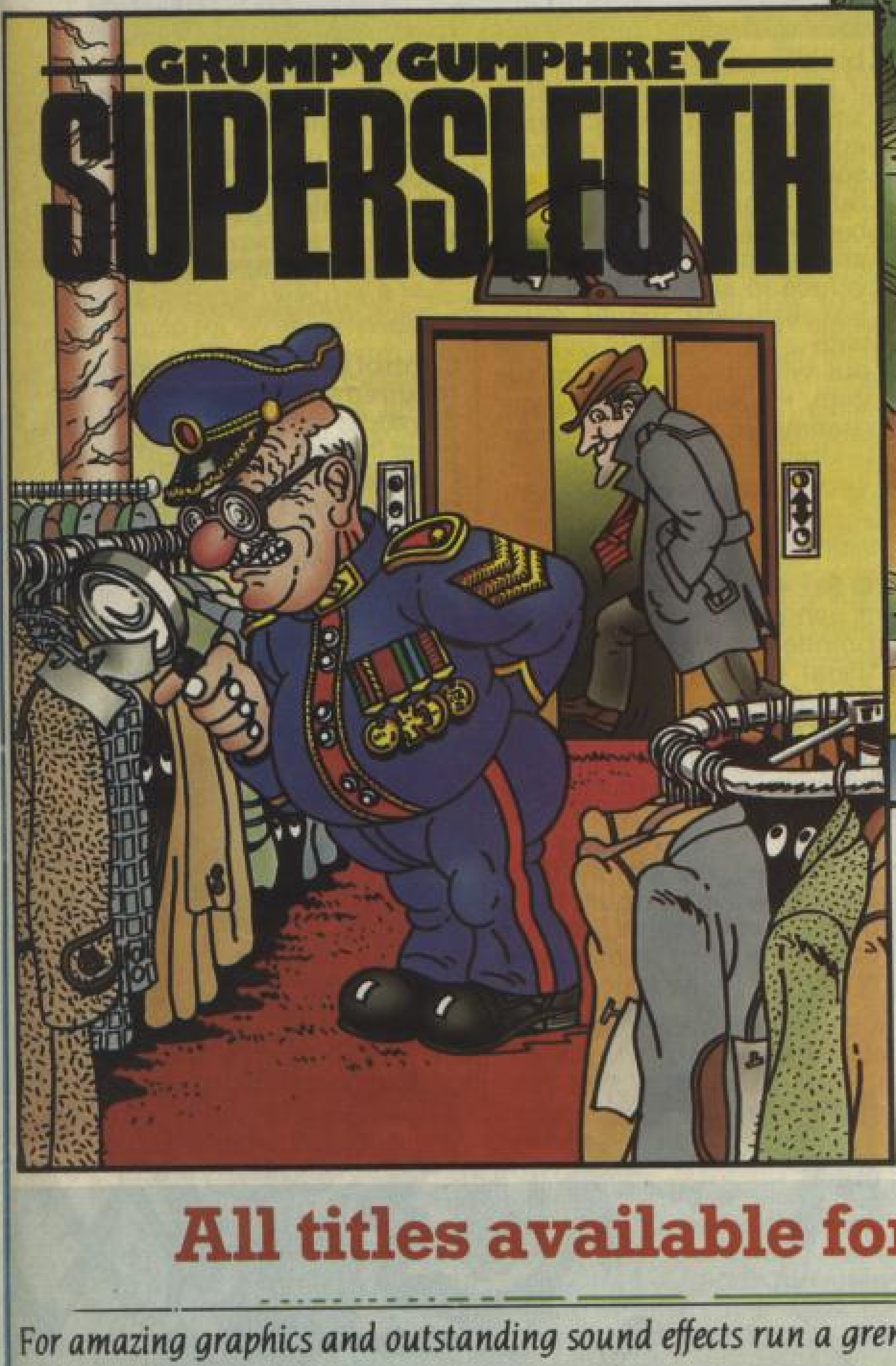
OTHER GREAT TITLES FROM GREMLIN:

Suicide Express	CBM 64 £7.95
Monty Mole	CBM 64 £7.95
	Spectrum 48k £6.95
Potty Pigeon	CBM 64 £7.95
	Spectrum 48k £6.95

OU'VE NOT GOT THE LINS, YOU DON'T KNOW AT YOU'RE MISSING!

Ex serviceman Gilbert Gumphrey, drummed out of the Army in 1946 because of his acute short-sightedness has been struggling to hold down his job as a store detective for the last thirty nine years. But things are hotting up for Gilbert, known to all as "Grumpy". Now that times are becoming harder and staff made redundant, he has to perform all kinds of tasks; not only catching thieves, but caging the gorilla and tidying the warehouse, otherwise he might find himself surplus to requirements too! Can Gilbert hang onto his job? You can help him, but be warned — this is no ordinary department store!





Poor Bob! All he wants is to lead a quiet life and build his dams. But the peace is soon shattered when the local townsfolk find their taps running dry. Bob's dams are plainly to blame so as soon as he completes one, the locals blow it up! And that isn't the end of Bob's troubles either, for there are sharks, crocodiles and all manner of underwater hazards for him to negotiate. Help Bob in his never ending struggle to build his dams and avoid the predators that lurk in the deep.

All titles available for Spectrum 48k £6.95

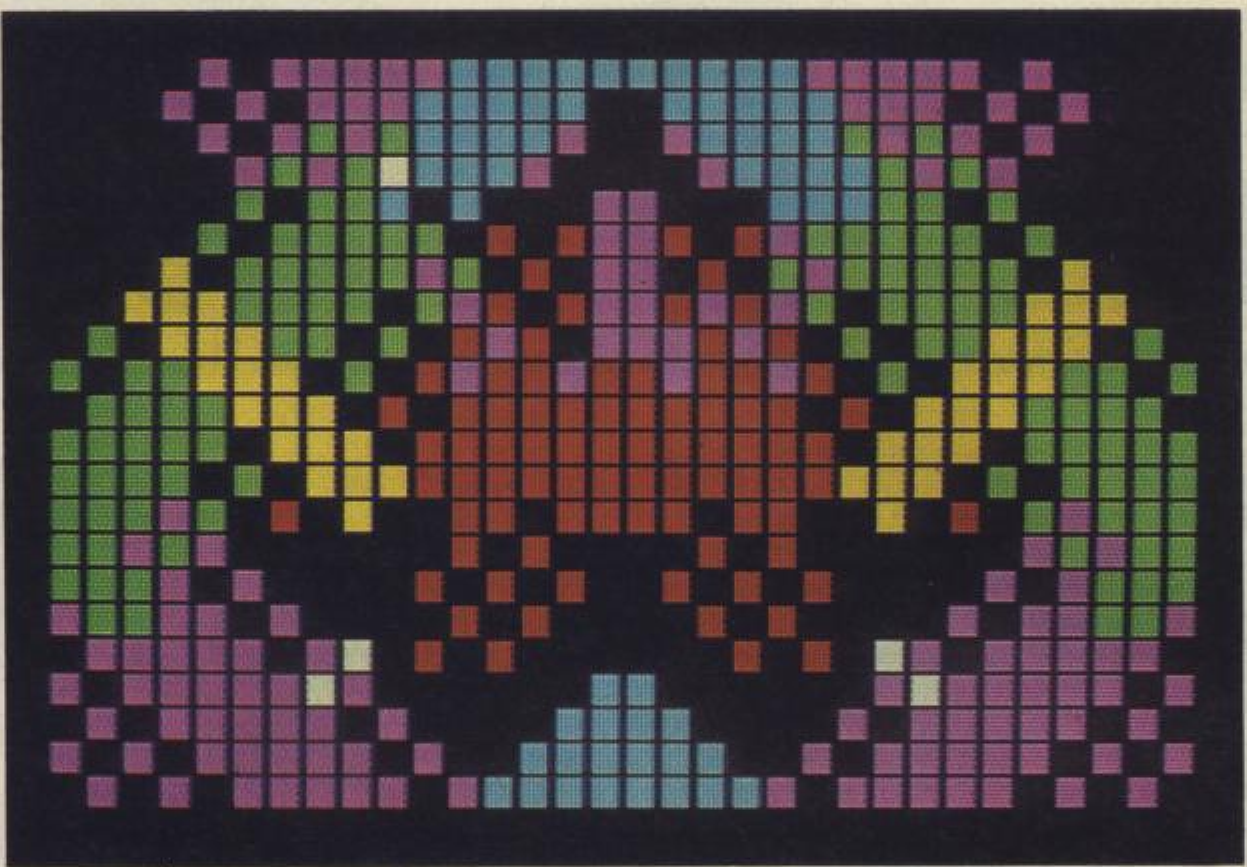
For amazing graphics and outstanding sound effects run a gremlin through your micro.

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Gremlin Graphics

PSYCHEDELIA

Producer: Llamasoft
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **The Hairy One**



This program is certainly very different not only because of the instruction manual which contains such passages as 'Psychedelia was the realisation of that dream . . . many evenings were spent freaking out to music and just DOING it' or 'Demos were given, minds were blown and a good time had by all'. Of course to the modern computer generation, the drugged dreams of the flower power, drop out hippy era probably seem as archaic as the Second World War.

'*Psychedelia* is a completely new way of enjoying your micro. If you love music, if you love graphics, if you are creative. . . .' he even goes on to admit that '*Psychedelia* is the high point of my designing career'. The hairy one certainly seems to have given it his all! The results can be spectacular, the opening screen gives a demonstration of what you might produce. Imagine, if you can, hundreds of tiny coloured squares dashing all over the screen, some run together, others collide, some move up while others move down or across this way and the other. Each square is one of a seven different colours, but it can change from one colour to the next while hurtling across the screen. Of course the you don't have to have coloured squares you can design shapes of your own by altering the pixels that make up a shape. Some of the easiest patterns to create would be star bursts or multi coloured spirals. The nearest visual analogy would be a highly coloured firework display, but of course *Psychedelia* is on a much smaller scale.

The purpose of the program is for you to design your own light displays and it provides some quite powerful routines to help you do just that. Initially the program is set up with some basic parameters for creating built in effects, these are activated via the cursor keys and keys Q–R — press different combinations of these keys and that should show you enough to make you curious.

The more advanced commands are divided into two parts, VARIABLES and OTHERS. In all there are nine variable commands. CURSOR SPEED simply alters the speed at which the squares move about the screen. PULSE WIDTH alters the speed with which burst of squares are sent across the screen. LINE WIDTH sets the width of pulse lines. The other commands perform much more complex tasks, far too complicated to describe here. When the user selects a variable to alter a little graduated bar appears at the bottom of the screen showing the value of the relevant variable. These values can be changed to suit your requirements, essentially finding the desired effects requires a great deal of trial and error but this is by far the most enjoyable method because one of the clever features of the package is the ability to alter the variable while the display is in full swing; better still by using the OTHER commands you are able to 'record' the patterns to memory as you alter the various parameters and eventually save the whole show to tape. About half an hour's worth of display can be saved for playback later, and that should be enough to blow anyone's mind!

Finally the writer offers some good advice, he admits that the package sounds complicated to use but suggests that '. . . the best way to learn is by experimentation, play with the values to see what happens just like you would tinker with a synthesiser . . . freak out with it . . . Blow minds with it, freak out your granny. Be creative.'

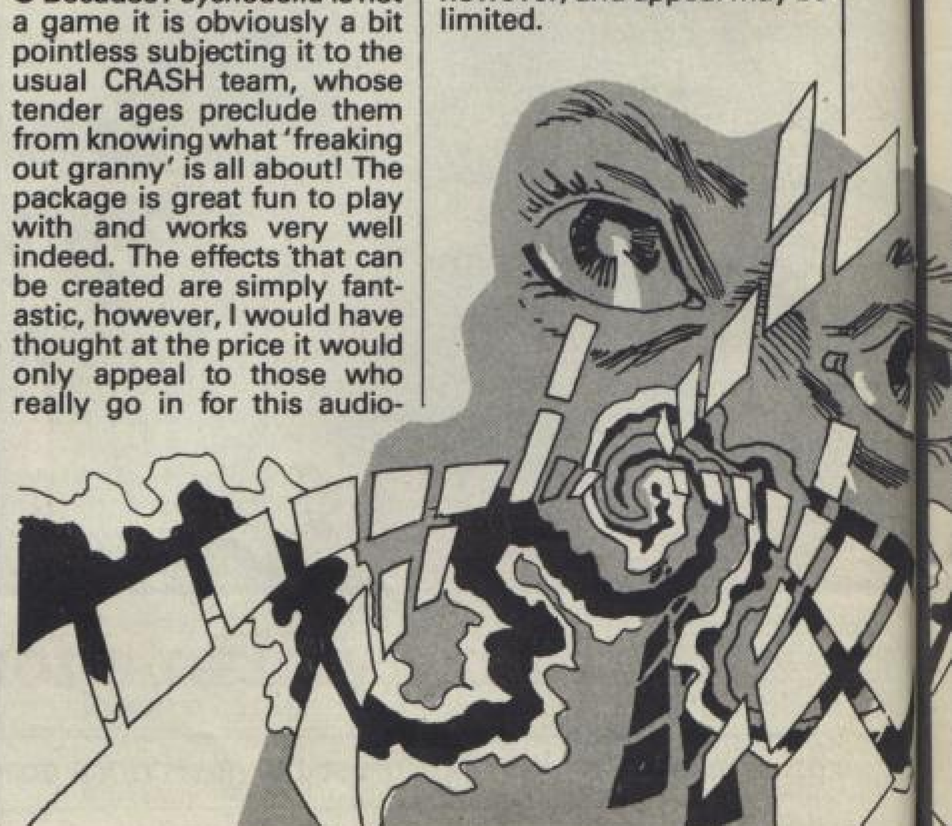
Uhm!

CRITICISM

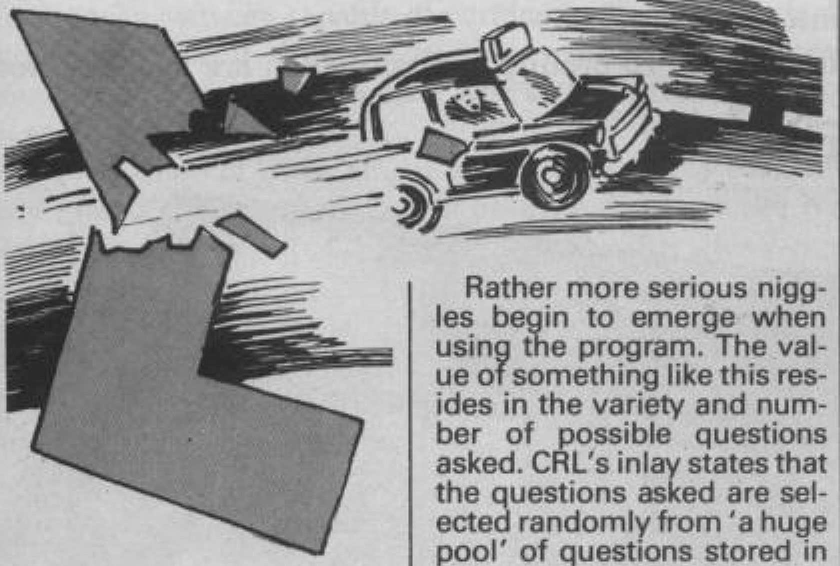
● Because *Psychedelia* is not a game it is obviously a bit pointless subjecting it to the usual CRASH team, whose tender ages preclude them from knowing what 'freaking out granny' is all about! The package is great fun to play with and works very well indeed. The effects that can be created are simply fantastic, however, I would have thought at the price it would only appeal to those who really go in for this audio-visual experience. After all it is pretty expensive and the less imaginative among us may not be prepared to spend the time and extract all that this program has to offer.

COMMENTS

Control keys: various inputs required — see manual
Joystick: cursor type and most makes
General rating: an unusual program with many applications to the user. Definitely out of the mainstream, however, and appeal may be limited.



HIGHWAY CODE



Producer: CRL
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **Mike Pertwee**

For those about to take their Driving Test, we salute thee! The practical test is most likely to cause the real heartache, yet many learners can fail through incorrect answers to those few friendly little questions the Tester asks at the end. The HMSO Highway Code book gets bulkier each year as more laws go on the statutes. This program from CRL with its Automobile Association seal of approval, is designed to help the learner motorist with the Highway Code theory.

It is presented in two forms, either as a 10 question game or a longer 25 question game. The object is to score 75% or better. Each question is presented on a three or four answer choice of which only one answer is correct, or a on true/false basis. Your answer is given by pressing the appropriate letter key and ENTER. A red arrow points to the correct answer and your score is updated. At the top left corner a small panel shows a page reference to the HMSO book so you can look the relevant information up in revision.

On completing a game you are given your total score and are told to re-read your Highway Code if it is below 75%. It's a small niggle, but with 10 questions it is of course impossible to get 75% as 10% is awarded per question.

Rather more serious niggles begin to emerge when using the program. The value of something like this resides in the variety and number of possible questions asked. CRL's inlay states that the questions asked are selected randomly from 'a huge pool' of questions stored in the computer. On four tries at the 10 question game and three tries at the 25 question game, I was asked no less than six questions each five times. This doesn't suggest all that big a 'pool' to me. The program is written entirely in BASIC (with the exception of a small machine code routine which creates the siren sound effect at the start of a game). Many PLOT and CIRCLE routines are used for the graphics (with one UDG for a car shape), PRINT statements are used for the large block lettering, and page after page of PRINT statements for all the questions and answers. English text in PRINT statement form is notoriously wasteful of memory, so it's little wonder that the program takes ages to load and contains not that many questions. Is it really very wise of CRL to make absurd claims for this program when anyone with their finger on BREAK or STOP can find out in a few seconds how large the 'pool' really is?

I'm a bit surprised that the AA should have so unreservedly put their stamp of approval on *Highway Code*, since a much better and larger version could have been done with some machine code and compression. But perhaps it is because this is the first attempt at such a program that they were swayed. In itself the idea isn't bad, and *Highway Code* could well prove useful as a revision guide for the most asked questions, and certainly this is more fun than doing it all from a book or getting a friend to ask the questions.

Roger Kean

A wealth of Peripherals for your Spectrum!

By RICK BRAVO

Since the 48K Spectrum was launched the opportunities it offered has attracted peripheral manufacturers throughout the world.

One of these manufacturers was bound to emerge as the "brand leader" and in the case of the Spectrum this turned out to be DK'tronics. The company is based in Saffron Walden in Essex and proudly boasts a history dating back to the ZX80. All the company's products are manufactured in England at their own factory and they have now established themselves as world leaders, exporting to over 30 countries.

Below you will find a review of their range which now includes over 16 products, all of which are available for the Spectrum and Spectrum + models.

Keyboard



The DK Microdrive Compatible Keyboard is the best selling keyboard in the world and is now used by around 10% of all U.K. Spectrum owners. It is microdrive compatible and offers more key functions than any other keyboard in its price range. The stepped keys and space bar make it even easier to use. It is constructed from high density black ABS and has 52 keys and a full width space bar. A separate numeric keypad of 12 red keys including single entry 'delete' plus single entry 'decimal point' facilitate fast numeric data entry.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £37.50 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

Dual Port



The first port simulates 6,7,8,9, & 0 Keys. The second port simulates in (31) command.

The port will accept any Atari style joystick.

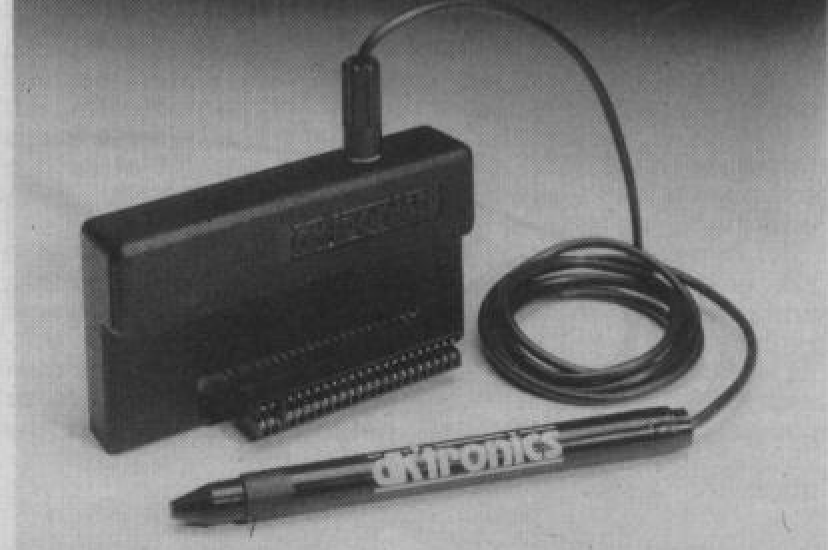
It will run any software. That is:-

(a) Using Keys 6,7,8,9 & 0.
(b) Having redefinable key instructions.
(c) Using in (31) (i.e. Kempston).

This Dual Port interface interconnects with the existing range of DK'tronics products to form the most comprehensive range of Spectrum peripherals available from any manufacturer.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £13.00 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

Light Pen



This highly successful Light Pen for the Sinclair Spectrum plugs neatly onto the rear of the Computer or the rear of the printer connector. The operating software now runs faster and supports 16 pre-defined instructions. You can change all the colours (Border, Paper, Ink), draw circles, arcs, boxes, lines and insert text onto the screen (ideal for diagrams etc.) Save & load completed or partly completed screens onto or from the tape.

There are also features to draw Free Hand and animate on the 48K Spectrum, you can retain and animate 5 screens.

You can also use the machine code on its own in your own programs for selecting out of a menu, playing games etc. All entry points necessary are given. The Pen works down to pixel level with pixel accuracy.

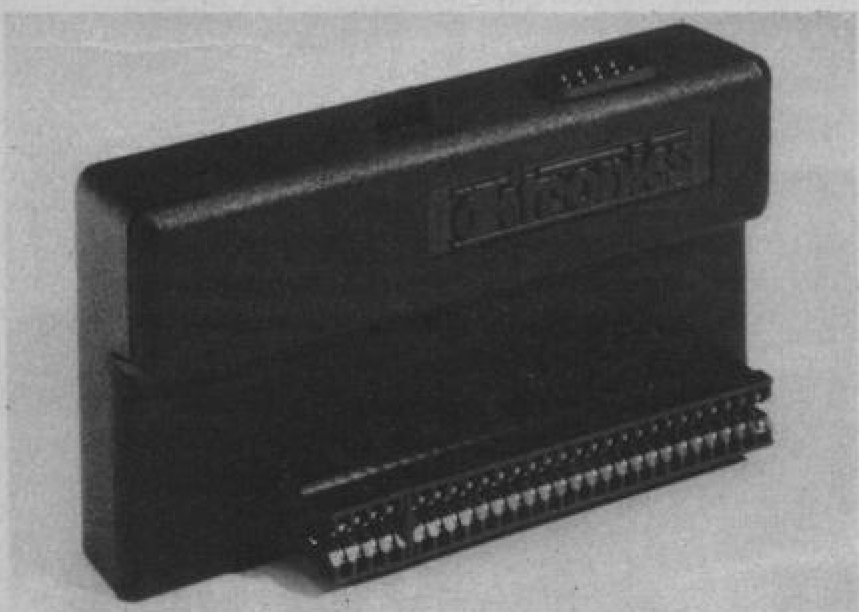
From good computer shops everywhere at only £19.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

From dk'tronics® Saffron Walden, Essex
CB11 3AQ tel:(0799)26350

3 Channel Sound Synthesizer

Any microcomputer is capable of manufacturing sound, however, in order to produce a single octave 'C' note with a frequency of 8372Hz the signal needs attention over 16,000 times per second.
To produce software capable of perfoming just this one task would be difficult if not impossible, especially when you consider that to produce arcade type sound effects requires even greater attention.
The production of these sound effects without the constant attention of the processor is now possible thanks to the AY Sound Chip, its flexibility makes it essential for a wide range of applications including music synthesis and sound effects generation, continuing the monitoring and production of sound after the initial command.
More often than not realistic sounds require more than one effect and this function is provided by 3 independently controlled channels, as an example compare the sound produced by the single note of 'C'with that produced by the chord 'C' and you will know just what I mean, likewise producing the sound of an explosion using all 3 channels gives games a totally new dimension.
Add to this the ability to alter the pitch tone and shape of the sound you have produced and it's flexibility is unlimited. In simple terms, imagine the note you have produced as a calm sea, by altering the pitch and shape you can produce waves, the top of the wave corresponds with the maximum volume and pitch of the note, which like the wave itself rises and falls.

Programmable



At last! A fully programmable joystick interface with feed through connector that really works!
Now you can run ANY software from ANY supplier with the DK'tronics fully programmable joystick interface. It comes complete with machine code software and can be programmed in seconds to give full 8 directional joystick movements plus five capabilities and will accept any Atari/Quickshot type joystick. A catalogue is now available showing the full range of products available from DK'tronics the world's leading Spectrum peripheral manufacturer. The through connector enables other add-ons to be plugged into the rear.
From good computer shops everywhere at only £22.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.



Speech Synthesizer

The speech synthesizer uses the popular SL0/256 speech chip and has an almost infinite vocabulary. It is supplied with a text to speech converter for ease of speech output creation. Everything you wish to be spoken is entered in normal English, without special control codes or characters, it is therefore extremely easy to use. The voicing of the words is completely user transparent and the computer can carry on its normal running of a program while the speech chip is talking.
Although there are only 26 letters in the alphabet, letters have a totally different sound when used in different words. For example, the "a" in Hay is much longer and softer than in Hat. When you speak you automatically make adjustments because you know just how a word should sound. Not quite so easy with a computer. After looking at other speech synthesizers we decided that it was essential that the DK'tronics. Spectrum Speech would offer a simple system that would enable the user to produce realistic speech that was instantly recognisable.
The solution to the problem was extremely complicated, it required hours of programming to enable the computer to look at the individual letters that make up each word and compare their relative position to each other before deciding on the appropriate sound.
I consider this to be the best Spectrum Speech Synthesizer on the market. From good computer shops everywhere at only £24.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

Centronics

The new Dk'tronics Parallel Centronics Interface will link your Spectrum to any printer with a standard centronics input. As the choice is vast, you can select the printer exactly suited to your needs.
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TOY BIZARRE

Producer: **Activision**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **David Turnell**

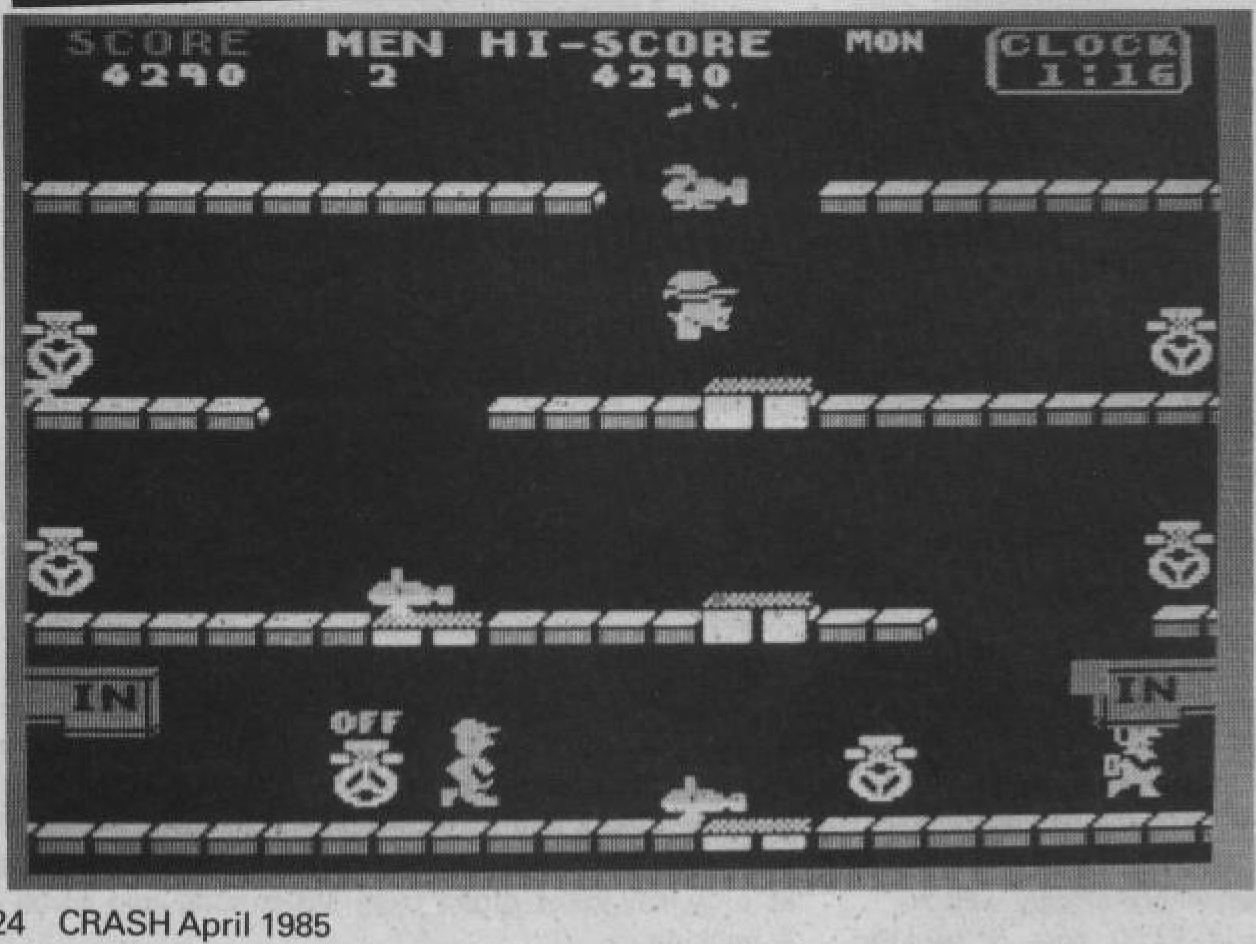
Included in the useful inlay of *Toy Bizarre* is this playing tip from the author himself: 'Listen, it's important to remember that you can control Merton while he's in the air. Also, the screen wraps around, that is, move off the left side and you'll appear on the right.' Activision obviously aren't giving anything away except a lecture on what wrap around means!

In this game you are cast as Merton the toy factory maintenance man who is unfortunate to be on the night shift when the factory goes berserk. Your task is to restore order, or die in the attempt, at the very least you will realise what it is to be understaffed

Essentially *Toy Bizarre* is a straight forward platform game with four levels. On each of three of the levels there are are two valves which periodically pump out a squidgy purple object, later identified as a balloon. If Merton can be encouraged to burst the balloons he will score points, however, should any of the balloons escape they will release a toy, a flying pink submarine, to be exact. Contact with the toys is unhealthy so the more balloons you can destroy the easier your progress will be. Bonus points will be awarded if you turn the valves off thus stemming the flow of balloons, not too much too ask is it? All you have to do is walk past them and off they go. Well life never is that simple and in this case the complication is in the form of an animated bodice called Hefty Hilda. Hilda spends most of her time chasing you round the screen trying to do you in, as well as turning all of the valves back on. If you are to succeed then you will have to survive to the end of your shift.

Should you survive the first screen you will be presented with another, but it will be harder than the last because the the platforms will be arranged so as to make jumping from one to the other that little bit more difficult and of course there will be more balloons. There are a few nice touches to the game which should help to keep you interested. As the toys move to the factory floor, to become balloons again, they will try their best to kill you, your only defence is to hope that one of the toys will land on one of the paired pistons located on each of the platforms, when it does you will be able to stun it simply by jumping up and down on the other piston, I admit it's not a great deal to look forward too but you could give Hilda a nasty shock.

You have to dash around like mad stopping the balloons from blowing themselkves up and turning into toys, which as we all know can be a bit bizarre



CRITICISM

● 'After playing *Toy Bizarre* I had to check if the name Activision on the cassette was the real one. I found this game rather unaddictive with jerky graphics and the central character was difficult to handle. He got killed many times, the pause after damage was unbearably long winded with him jumping off the screen. Unfortunately the game left me with that 'Pedro' and 'Cosmic Cruiser' feel. I hope Activision haven't lost their way as this is certainly not the way forward. I did not actually enjoy *Toy Bizarre*, but I'm sure there will be those whose opinions differ. Pretty average-ish.'

● *'This is one of those games you play without thinking as it needs no skill nor brains to play, just jump on the balloons and collect tea cups and extra lives. It's graphics and sound aren't that bad, but they're nothing to write home about. I like the way your man once hit by a toy or squashed by Hilda, walks off looking very flat.'*

● '*Toy Bizarre* is an unusual mixture of platform game and catching game. What is unusual is that objects (balloons) that you have to collect are mobile and after a while turn into a destructive toy. The game idea is very, very simple and even a youngster could pick it up quite quickly, which could be a good selling point. I find this game very playable and it does get progressively fast moving, as the hours tick on. I like some of the features such as 'Tea Time' when you are allowed to get points for every object, including toys, you catch, and also the way you get an extra life — you have to grab it when it appears somewhere on the screen. Graphics are neat, smooth and well detailed. Overall I think the younger games player will love this game although as an older one I found this game fun to play as well.'

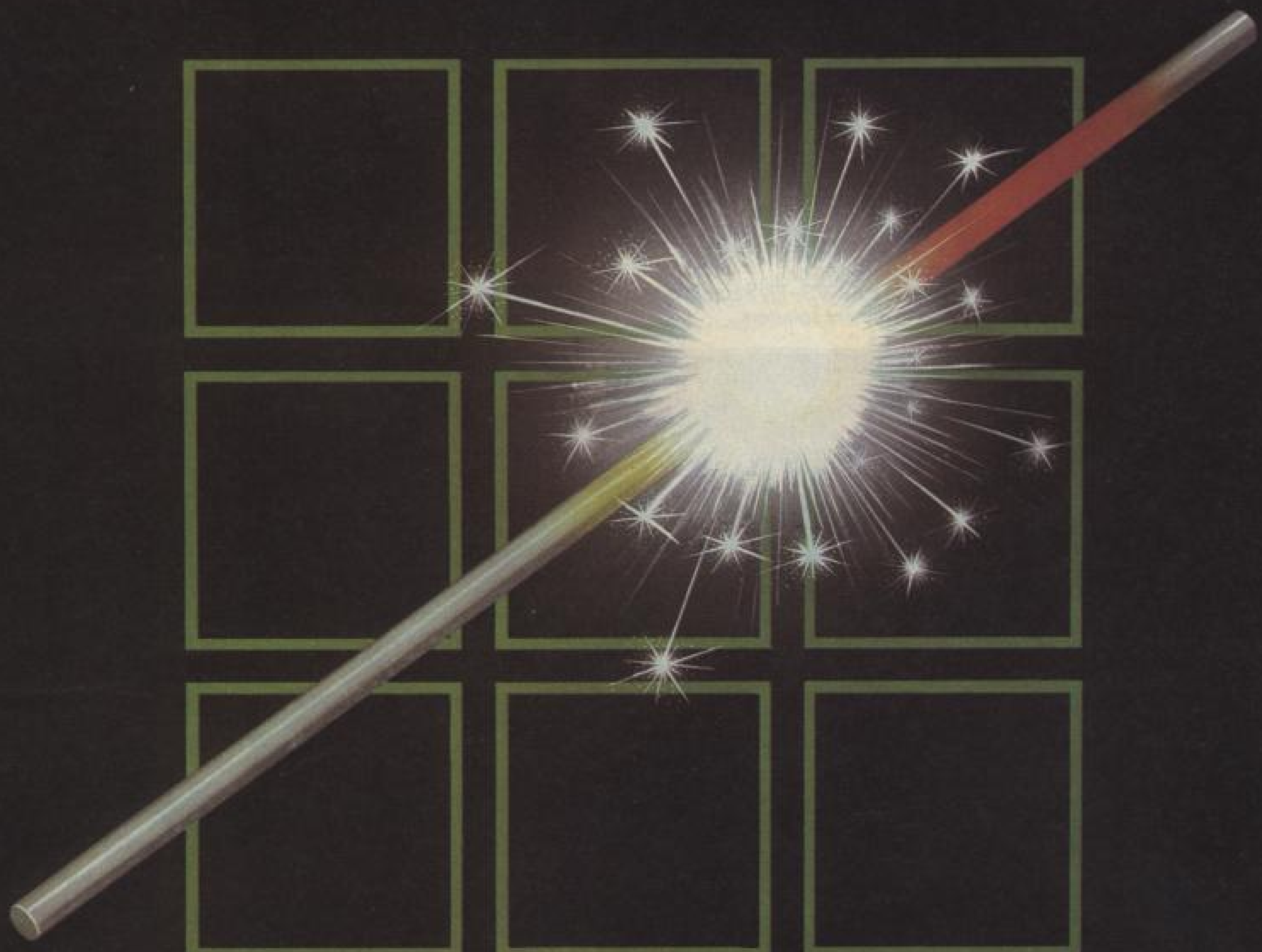
COMMENTS

Control keys: O/P left/right, Z to jump
Joystick: Sinclair 2, Kempston, Cursor type
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: above average
Graphics: some disagreement, but they seem smooth enough
Sound: good, with a nice tune
Skill levels: 1 with rapid progressive difficulty
Lives: 5
Screens: unknown, but several
General rating: again, mixed feelings, ranging from average to good, but at £8, very expensive.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	72%
Playability	64%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**65%**

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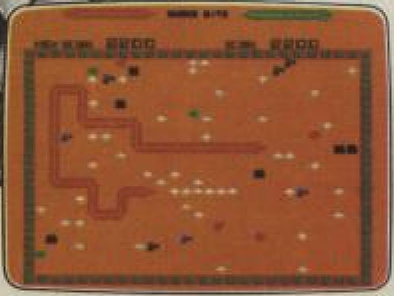
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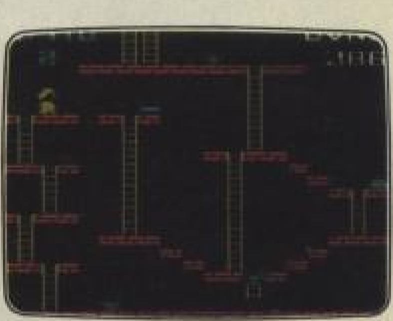
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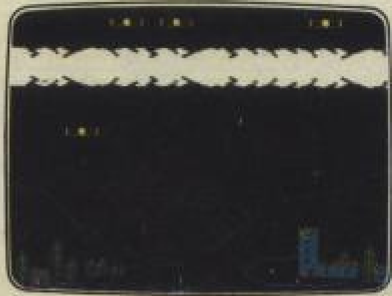
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003 Arcade BBC MICRO B
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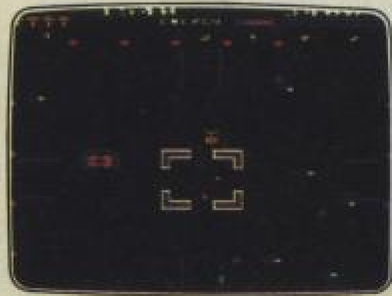
004 Arcade BBC MICRO B
GOLD DIGGER – The hazards of digging for gold down under.



005 Arcade BBC MICRO B
DUCK! – Comedy and music in this duck shoot.



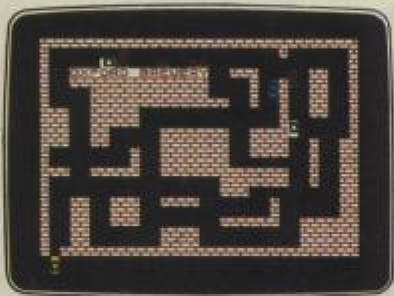
013 Arcade BBC MICRO B
ACID DROPS – Fly through to tackle the mutant spinners.



022 Arcade BBC MICRO B
ESTRA – Recover the sacred statue of Estra the snake god.



023 Arcade/Strategy BBC MICRO B
THE HACKER – Terminal to modem, telephone network to mainframe.



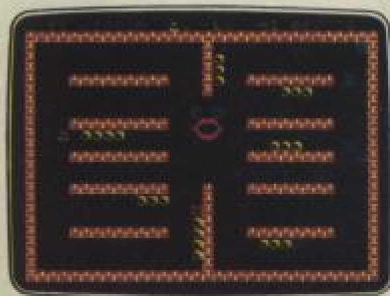
006 Arcade SPECTRUM 16K/48K
RUN BABY RUN – Multi-car cop chase and shoot-out.



009 Arcade SPECTRUM 16K/48K
TERRA FORCE – Terra man defends earth against all odds.



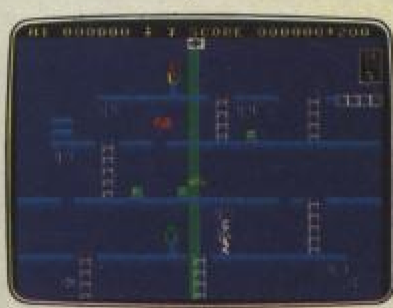
010 Arcade SPECTRUM 16K/48K
MENACE – What happens when teacher turns his back.



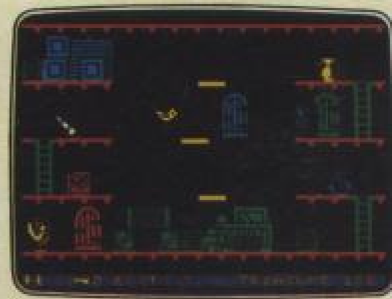
021 Arcade SPECTRUM 16K/48K
CRAZY CAVERNS – Ten crazy caverns, ten hungry mouths to feed.



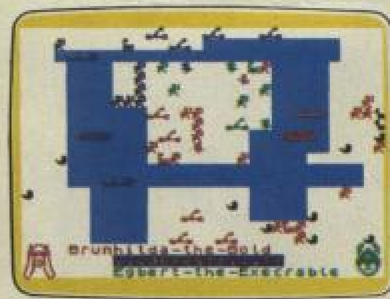
007 Arcade SPECTRUM 48K
EXODUS – Strange creatures emerging from the pits.



014 Arcade/Strategy SPECTRUM 48K
MR. FREEZE – Six compartments, each tougher to de-ice.



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011 Arcade SPECTRUM 48K
BYTE BITTEN – Solve the clue then play Sea King.



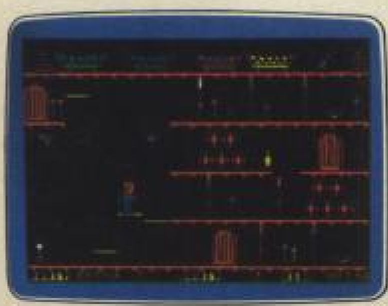
012 Adventure SPECTRUM 48K
THE WILD BUNCH – Accused of murder, hunt the real killer.



018 Arcade COMMODORE 64
EXODUS – Strange creatures emerging from the pits.



015 Arcade/Strategy COMMODORE 64
MR. FREEZE – Six compartments, each tougher to de-ice.



017 Arcade Adventure COMMODORE 64
BOOTY – Twenty holds crammed full of pirate loot.



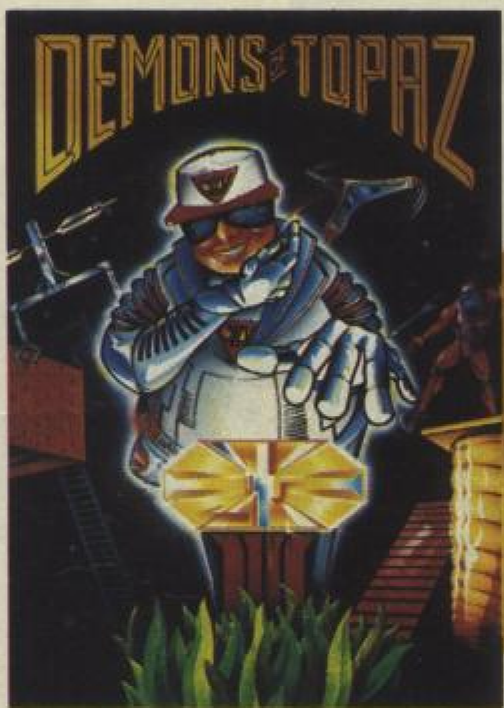
019 Arcade COMMODORE 64
HEADACHE – Nervous Ned's quest to serve The Brain.



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ANNE LOVEJOY + STEVEN CROW

Photo: NICK SACK



MOVE ALON

As a software company, Bubble Bus has been active for a couple of years, regularly turning up at computer shows with their distinctive red stand modelled on a double-decker bus. Most of their games have been for the Commodore 64 and Vic20 but they have been broadening out their range recently with games for the MSX machines, the Einstein and Amstrad either ready or on the way. Their first game for the Spectrum was HUSTLER, a pool simulation which came out just before Christmas. But now they've got a CRASH Smash on their hands, in the form of WIZARD'S LAIR, which was written by STEVEN CROW, a 19 year old freelance programmer. CRASH person GRAEME KIDD talked to Steven at the recent LET show at Olympia.



It would have been much more pleasant to have interviewed Steven on Bubble Bus' home ground — they're based in a converted granary in Tunbridge, Kent, which is quite an idyllic setting — 'duck mind your head' signs on the beams and a river meandering at the bottom of the garden. As it was the, tight-fisted Editor of this organ, having failed to co-erce poor old Lloyd Mangram into cycling from his cottage to the Bubble Bus HQ, thrust a tape recorder into my hand at the LET show and sent me off to find Steven.

Steven started programming while he was at school, as a hobby more than anything else; using a 380Z he wrote his first game four years ago:

'Then I got a ZX81 and wrote a few games on that. It wasn't until I got a Spectrum that I started taking it more seriously. The first game I ever got marketed was a game called *Lazer Snaker* and that was for Poppysoft, about a year and a half ago — before CRASH came out. Then after that I wrote *Factory Breakout*, again for Poppysoft. Since then Poppysoft has folded and I'm just a freelance programmer — that's how I went to Bubble Bus to show them my game and they decided to take it on.'

Getting the awkward question out of the way quickly, I had to say that *Wizard's Lair* bore quite a resemblance to *Atic Atac*, and could come in for some criticism in much the same way Ultimate's *Alien 8* has for being strikingly similar to *Knight Lore*:

'Yes, that's right, but it's got lots of different features which I'm sure will keep people occupied. Everyone who's played *Wizard's Lair*, even people who've played *Atic Atac* a lot, say they like playing it.'

We agreed, without animosity, that it doesn't matter much if one games looks like another if it plays as well, better or differently. (Phew, no violence, which was just as well because I'm positive old dash Ed didn't insure me.)

When you come to write a game how do you go about it — do you sit down with a graphical idea?

S Yes, I sort of draw out a few screen shots of what I want the game to look like and then after that I think of all the features I want to put in it. Before I start I make sure I have everything sorted out so that I know it'll fit in the memory. When you're writing 45K of code it's got to fit in. I allocate for each section of the game how much I'm going to give such so the map might have 7K — I'll allocate 7K for the map and 20K for graphics — that's how I do it

G So it's not just structured programming, it's structured games design?



S Yes, the actual program isn't so structured but the idea is. I wouldn't start a game and only have half an idea of what I'm going to do. You don't know how its going to turn out then and it's a bit of a risk.

G How do you design your graphics?

S I write my own routines that do graphics and I just sketch them on the screen I either have a joystick connected or use cursor keys. I draw everything onto the screen first — if I want to draw a tree I just fiddle about on the screen until I've got a tree that I'm happy with.

G Have you had any art training?

S Yes, I got an 'O' Level in one year, and was doing the 'A' Level but had to give it up. I liked art, that was probably my best subject at school.

G So that the actual shape drawing isn't too much of a problem?

S No, no, I don't have any problem really — if I don't like something I'll get rid of it and try and draw it again.

G In *Wizard's Lair* the graphics are particularly outstanding.

S Yes, it took me a long time to do some of those things! The long case clock probably took the longest — that really took me a long time to get right — and also the little bloke so it looks as if you're looking down on him. Making his head look bigger than his feet as if you're looking down on him, that took quite a lot of time — I must have done about ten drawings before I was satisfied.

G What sort of plans do you have at the moment, are you working on another project?

S Yes, I am writing another game — a 500 screen arcade /adventure — hopefully I'm going to put it on the Spectrum and MSX and on the Amstrad as well — I want to broaden out on to other machines — because when you've and spent a long time writing a game and getting everything right, converting it to run on to another machine is not too much hard work and of course you get more sales that way.

Bubble Bus's other game for the Spectrum, *Hustler*, came out about the same time as the Steve Davis endorsed version of snooker, and I asked **Anne** from Bubble Bus whether she felt having a name to put behind a game was going to become increasingly important: 'We thought about buying or negotiating for rights, but I don't know — if you've got a good game it'll sell anyway. We've got no real plans in that direction and are just waiting and seeing.'

'I think people are now getting a bit suspicious of things like *War of the Worlds*, *Ghostbusters* etc. on the Spectrum, they've all been a bit of a flop,' Steve chipped in. 'I think that although the games have worked quite well commercially, people are going to wise up after a while, to the point where there might even be suspicion around games tied in to a big name.'

Steve has always worked as a freelance, starting in the days when he worked for the now defunct Poppysoft and has never worked as part of a team of programmers writing a game. He admits to being a bit of a loner, and gets a lot of satisfaction from starting a game and completing it himself.

G What about the gloom and dispondency which is being preached in parts of the software industry? How does it affect you as a freelance?

S I've been talking to a lot of software companies and many of them now have much longer term ideas. One firm was looking for three titles off me before they would even be interested in taking any software from me. They were thinking they'd still be here in five years' time. . . .

G THE BUS PLEASE!

BUBBLING UNDER!!



Crash Competition

While we were talking to Anne and Steve at the LET show, Steve handed over a high score validating tape for WIZARD'S LAIR — 'Would you like to let Lloyd Mangram have this, it might help keep the cheats out of his Hall of Slime. . . .' Sc be warned!

We chatted some more, and over the next few days the germ of an idea for a competition based on WIZARD'S LAIR began to grow. So here is part one of a high score challenge thrown open to our readers by Bubble Bus:

To enter PART TWO of this competition, you'll need to send in a high score on the game — more details of that in the next issue. You'll need a joystick to compete seriously in the WIZARD'S LAIR HIGH SCORE CHALLENGE — and in case you haven't already got a joystick interface RAM ELECTRONICS have kindly offered six of their top-of-the-range TURBO INTERFACES as prizes. It's quite a neat piece of equipment, which works with ROM cartridges as well, allows you to connect two standard joysticks and has an expansion bus at the rear so you can bolt even more goodies onto your Spectrum.

BUBBLE BUS are also offering twenty T shirts in the first leg of this competition, and all you've got to do is look back at your March edition of CRASH, read our review of WIZARD'S LAIR and answer the following questions. Entries on the back of a sealed envelope or postcard to the usual address AND DON'T FORGET TO PUT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON YOUR ENTRY AS WELL AS YOUR T-SHIRT SIZE.

The first five correct solutions out of the bag at the end of April will win a T-shirt and Turbo Interface; the next fifteen get Bubble Bus T-shirts.

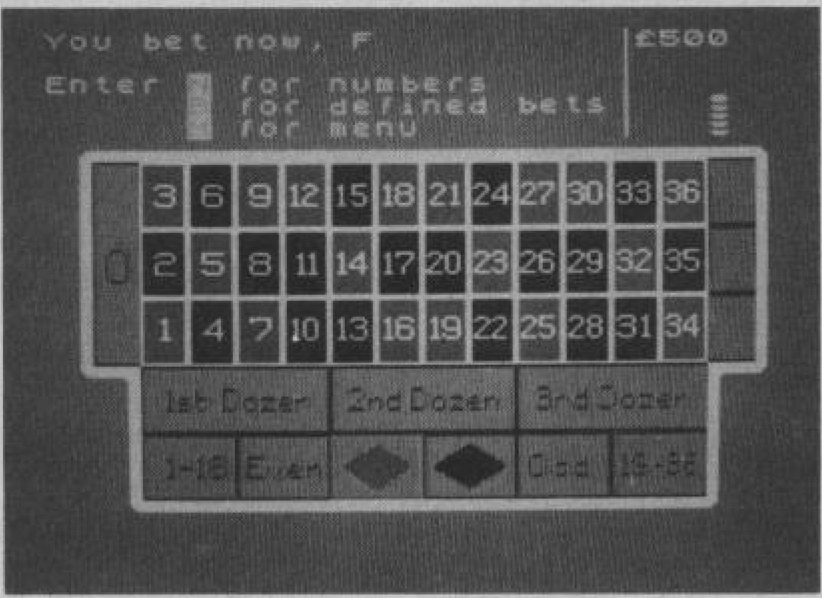
And you should be thinking about getting hold of a copy of the CRASH smashed WIZARD'S LAIR so's you can get some practice in for the Hi-score challenge!!

BUBBLE BUS COMPETITION

1. What is the overall objective in playing *Wizard's Lair*?
2. Multiply the number of screens in the game by the answer to question 5 and divide by the total number of door keys shown on the screen photographs with the review. What's the number you end up with?
3. What was the 'deliberate' mistake that was printed in our review of *Wizard's Lair* (oops)?
4. What is the name of the character you play in *Wizard's Lair*?
5. How many times are the words 'Wizard's Lair' used in the review (pages 34, 35 and 36 in last issue)?

CASINO ROYAL

Producer: **OCP**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: machine code
Author: **Andrew Parish**



The roulette betting board in CASINO ROYAL — James Bond preferred gambling on the cards however . . .

Casino Royal provides two separate games, Pontoon and Roulette. The games are well presented and come with full and clear instructions.

The first part of the evening will be spent at the Roulette table. The opening menu asks for the names of the players and up to six can be input so that should give you room for the dog as well. Should the dog want to leave he can do so just before the next round of betting begins, if the cat wants a go then this is the time to join the game.

Each player starts the game with a stake of £500 and each player is asked in turn what bets he or she (or it) would like to place. Betting in Roulette is not simple, the different combinations are mind blowing but all of the combinations are listed in the instructions which also gives the odds for a win on any of the combinations. When placing your bets each player is allowed to use a different method of input, apart from simple keyboard entry. Replying to the questions asked by the computer, a player can use a joystick to position a flashing cursor over the bet and confirm by pressing fire. All players face a choice between making number bets (betting on a block of up to six numbers) or defined bets where the player bets on a block of more than six numbers, perhaps all black or all even. Clearly the larger the area covered by a defined bet the higher the chances of winning but the odds will be smaller as will be the reward. The maximum stake is £1000 but of course this will depend on the amount of Oak'n'ash held by the player.

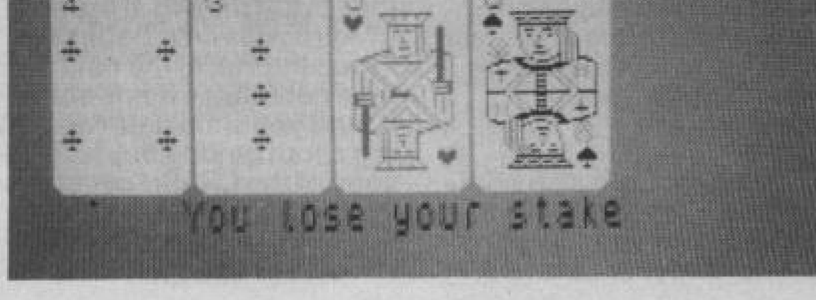
The wheel spins for twenty seconds, when it has come to rest the winning combination is given eg.'20, black, evens 18 and above'. The next screen shows how each player fared listing the wins and the amount of money each has remaining. The program does offer a short tutorial on betting to guide the players, this combined with the instructions should provide all of the information required so when you lose all of your money at least you will know why.

The second game on the tape is pontoon, the load time is very short but then it's not a very complex version of the game since it only allows one player against the bank. To play the game is simplicity itself. First the bank will shuffle the cards and deal one face for the player and one, face down for himself. The player will be asked for a bet which can be for any amount up to his capital — initially £100. After the first bet the player is dealt his second card and the bank deals himself another card this time face up. The player is then given the choice of standing, twisting or buying a card. The player must decide how likely it will be that his hand will be better than the bank's, should he decide that his chances are not terrific then he will ask for another card.

The game of Pontoon must be as well known as Snap but there are many variations in which the rules are slightly different. This version pays the pot to the highest hand less than twenty one. Should the bank draw 21 then it will cost the player double stake. A burn or change of cards is provided for if a player is dealt two cards with a value of thirteen or fourteen, should this happen then the deal will begin again. If the bank draws a Royal pontoon then it will be declared immediately. As with Roulette a player's capital is displayed together with his current bet. The game will terminate when a player loses all of his money, there isn't an option to leave the game before that happens — there must be moral there somewhere.

The joystick option is only required for the Roulette game but both games make effective use of the Currah Microspeech unit. Full instructions are provided should you want to make a micro drive copy.

. . . so if you're fed up with the wheel, you can always try your hand at Pontoon



CRITICISM

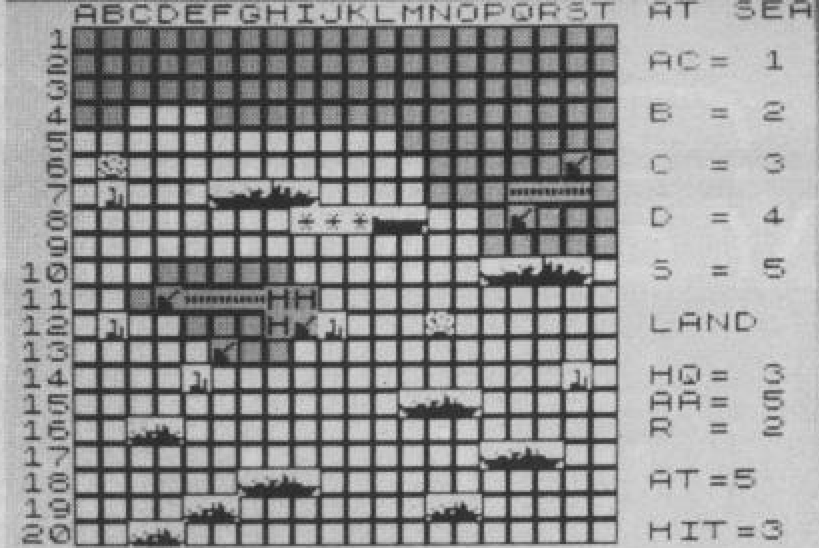
● 'This classic games package consists of two well known games, Pontoon and Roulette. Both games closely follow the real thing, with suitable graphics to show the cards, wheel and board etc. For non-Roulette players such as myself there are instructions provided. Although the games are not in the Smash league they're quite good and will obviously appeal to those who enjoy such games, but who don't actually want to lose any money.'

● *'A very pleasing implementation of a well trodden theme. The main advantage that the OCP package offers has to be the Currah Microspeech option which really helps to create an atmosphere as well as making the games far more real to play. After a while I did get rather tired of being told, 'you lose your stake.' The graphics are very pleasing, they are helped by a subtle use of colour. The prompt and input system has been well thought out and is very simple to use. Whenever I play this type of game I can never convince myself that the machine is not cheating, what sort of person, I ask myself, could draw 4 cards with a value of 17 and then go on to draw another and get a five card trick. Answer, the sort of person who knows that my hand was 19.*

COMMENTS

Control keys: respond to prompts
Joystick: Cursor type, Sinclair 2, Kempston
Keyboard play: input system allows easy use of the keyboard
Use of colour: very appropriate, not garish
Graphics: provide a pleasant and intelligible display
Sound: makes excellent use of the Currah unit
Skill levels: only one required
General rating: a very pleasing version, if you enjoy this type of game this version is well worth considering.

Use of computer	**69%**
Graphics	**75%**
Playability	**68%**
Getting started	**83%**
Addictive qualities	**57%**
Overall	**62%**



It's more exciting than using paper and pencils, but the shame is that the ships can only be plotted horizontally, on the other hand there are the land-based targets as well

SEA BATTLES

Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: machine code
Author: Robert Bradshaw

Sea Battles is a computer version of the well known pen'n paper game, 'Battleships'. Full instructions are provided as the program runs. The player sets up his forces by entering the co-ordinates in which the left-most part of the object will appear, for example a ship is placed by entering the co-ordinates in which the stern section will be placed. This method does mean that targets can only be placed horizontally which makes them easier to hit once you have found them.

After the forces have been set up game play commences. To shoot the player enters the co-ordinates and the sound indicates if there was a hit or not, otherwise the map will show a splash symbol for a miss or a large cross for a hit. Next the computer makes its shot and to do this the map is redrawn so that your forces can be seen and the computer's shots recorded in the same way as before. The player can decide between entering his own co-ordinates or allowing the computer to make a random shot on his behalf. The remains of the forces are listed alongside each of the maps together with the number of attempts and hits for each player.

CRITICISM

● 'I never enjoyed Battleships on pen and paper and this game does not really add anything to make it more fun. The implementation works well but the constant drawing and redrawing of the screen slows the game down a lot. The graphics are effective and the colours aid clarity, all except for a rather upsetting multi-colour moving backdrop that appears while the computer is waiting for its move which is hard on the eyes. Putting the required answers into the machine worked well except when it came to the player's turn to shoot. The player has to press the enter key to select his own targets but to select a random shot means pressing any key, in the heat of the battle I found myself forgetting to press enter so the computer mistook the first letter of my co-ordinates as an any key press, that's why I kept losing you see.'

● 'Sea Battles' *packaging says that the battleships game 'has really stood the test of time'. To be honest this is true as most enjoy this game. The graphics etc. are adequate for this type of game.* Sea Battles *improves on the original by having land targets but it loses out by not being able to place the targets on any plane except the horizontal. Overall quite good, I would like to have seen a game save facility as this game can last a long time.*

● 'Games like *Sea Battles* definitely come under the heading of 'if you like the type' games. Quite obvious-

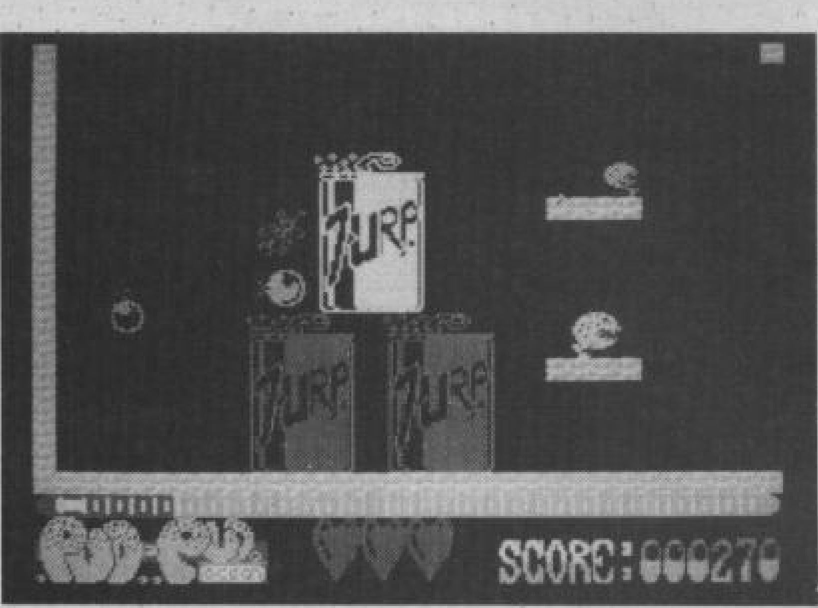
PUD PUD

Producer: **Ocean**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **s'htimS nahtanoJ**

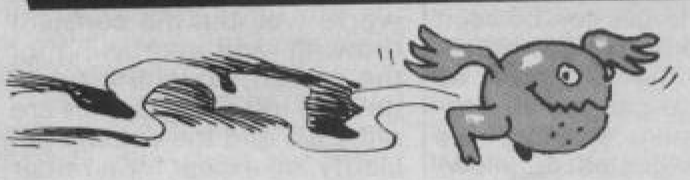
Pud Pud's author is a bit backward as the title screen proves. To save you getting a mirror out, his forwards name is Jonathan Smith. The object of the game is to help Pud Pud escape from Weird World by eating all ten hidden puddings.

Pud Pud himself, apart from obviously being a flying pudding, resembles a hyperactive Pacman character with flapping ears. The place is full of other creatures whittering around some of which, when eaten by Pud Pud, replenish energy, and others kill. Mrs. Pud Pud is the one to avoid, as her kiss is deadly. The various screens are interlinked and incorporate platforms held in position by large graphics of things like bits of the statue of Liberty or parts of broken Spectrums.

Pud Pud walks when on the floor of a platform, but tucks his legs up to flap when in the air. Energy is displayed as a bar at the base of the screen while the lives are three large hearts which deflate like punctured balloons when a life is lost through eating the wrong thing or running out of energy. When he dies, the rotund hero explodes into colourful bits and sinks to the ground as a dressed chicken.



One of the unusual screens from PUD PUD — you are the rather dragonesque pacman figure on legs on the lowest platform



CRITICISM

● *'Pud Pud* is one of the weirdest games I've played for a long while — it really is strange, no hints or tips are given on the inlay, it just says 'find ten hidden puddings'. I've yet to find one and I've been playing for some considerable time. What do they look like — real puddings or what. And what confuses the issue even more is that if you exit and then re-enter the same screen, all the colours change. Very confusing. The graphics are very, very . . . different (is this the right word)? This isn't to say that they are bad, indeed they are very good, move well and are exceptionally detailed and colourful. Jonathan Smith must be a very abnormal person, or even a relative of Matthew Smith (no offence intended)! Everything is so out of this world, his imagination or inspiration must come from nightmares. (STOP PRESS — found a pudding —gasp— thank goodness). The only drawback I can find to this game is that it is so difficult to find the puddings although better difficult than too easy. The music in *Pud Pud* is extremely good. Overall a totally different game . . . (is this the right word for it)?'

● *'A slight thrill! Wasn't this the game you could just see being assessed on the telly programme about Imagine and Ocean just before Christmas? I thought then that it looked a little dated and seeing the real thing hasn't changed my mind entirely. The graphics are excellent, helping to create a really weird world all right. Pud Pud himself is a dubious character — is he nice or nasty, is this the first computer anti-hero? If you don't find a pudding quickly it can get a bit confusing (they are placed randomly each game and the second only materialises when the first has been eaten and so on). The main difficulty placed in your path is the short length of energy time you are given and eating the proper food to keep it up isn't always as easy as it first seems. In the end I grew to like* Pud Pud, *but I can't honestly say that it would hold my attention for too long.'*

● 'At first glance this looks like a platform game but it isn't really. True, there are platforms around, but they are really there to create a simple form of maze. The game is simple too, flap or walk your way round until you find a randomly hidden pudding, eat it and another will appear somewhere else in the maze of interlinked screens. Keep you energy up by eating flying things, whilst avoiding eating anything else as that just decreases your energy. As a result the game is very playable but lacks lasting appeal in the end. Graphically it is very good with nice animation and the large maze characters add to the *art*mosphere. Sound, too, is good, with a powerful synthesiser tune at the start. I enjoyed it, but wouldn't actually go out and buy it.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q or O/W or P left/right, SPACE or CAPS to flap
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2, Cursor type
Keyboard play: responsive, a simple layout and easy to use when you get used to gravity
Use of colour: unusual, very bright and varied
Graphics: also unusual, well animated and smooth
Sound: excellent tune, good spot effects
Skill levels: 1 but progressive after 10 puddings
Lives: 3
Screens: unknown but several interlinked
General rating: a slick, glossy high quality package as one expects from ocean, but perhaps lacking in addictivity.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	81%
Playability	76%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	**77%**
Overall	**75%**

Sea Battles

ly, if you enjoy playing the paper version of the traditional game, then you will no doubt enjoy playing this computer version, and it's sensible of Atlantis to release a game like this at a budget price, because it obviously isn't in the best-seller league. I must say I thoroughly enjoyed playing it, but I find the original game absorbing on a wet day. The graphics are adequate to the purpose and everything seems to work quite well. A pity ships are always oriented in the same direction — it takes some of the planning fun out of it.'

COMMENTS

control keys: as required by prompts
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: input works well
Use of colour: appropriate
Graphics: well done but slow
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
General rating: good fun if you enjoy Battleships. Better than average.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	48%
Playability	49%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**60%**


COMBAT LYNX
From DURELL
(Technical Support from Westland Helicopters)
SPECTRUM 48k – COMMODORE 64 – BBC – AMSTRAD (soon)
SPECTRUM
COMMODORE 64
DURELL sales dept.,
Castle Lodge, Castle Green, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4AB

Crash Competition

WELCOME TO BROAD STREET

In fact welcome to the Competition of the Game of the Film!

As a very special favour, PAUL MCCARTNEY has signed two copies of his latest album, the soundtrack from his film GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET.





In the spirit of fairness (and because ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE have also released BROAD STREET the game on the Commodore 64) we're only offering one of the signed albums in this competition — the other being up for grabs in ZZAP! 64's April launch edition.

We haven't been able to review the Spectrum version of BROAD STREET, 'cos it won't be ready 'till the middle of this month, but from what we've seen of the 64 version it should be good.

Based on the film, the game is part of the Argus MINDGAMES series which so far includes ALIEN and AMERICAN FOOTBALL — so you can imagine it's not a shoot em up!

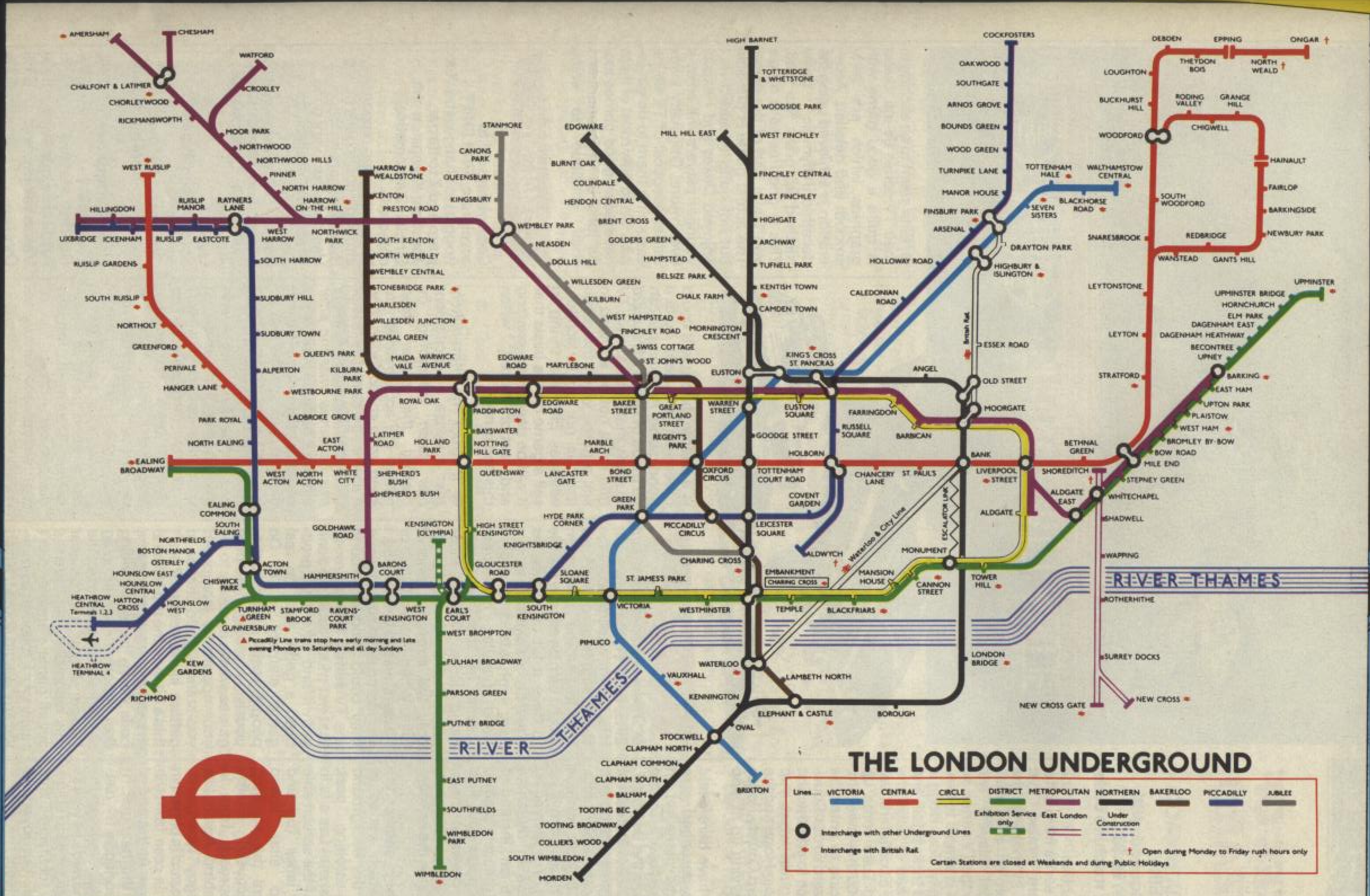
Playing the role of PAUL MCCARTNEY, you have to drive around the streets of London in a 5-litre Ford Prefect trying to track down the other 7 members of your band. The aim is to collect the missing chords of a new single — NO MORE LONELY NIGHTS. It's Saturday, and before the day's out you've got to complete the mission or face financial ruin. Having played with the band for many years you know something about the habits of your friends, who travel around London on the Tube (Underground)...



The top prize, the signed album of GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET, a sweatshirt and a copy of the game, will go to the outright winner; the next five winners in line will each get an unsigned copy of the album, a sweatshirt and a copy of the game; and 20 runners-up will each be sent a copy of the game — which retails at £7.99 and includes a colour poster with stills from the film and a large map of London to help you play it.

To help prepare you for playing the game, here's a few questions to test your knowledge of the London Underground system:

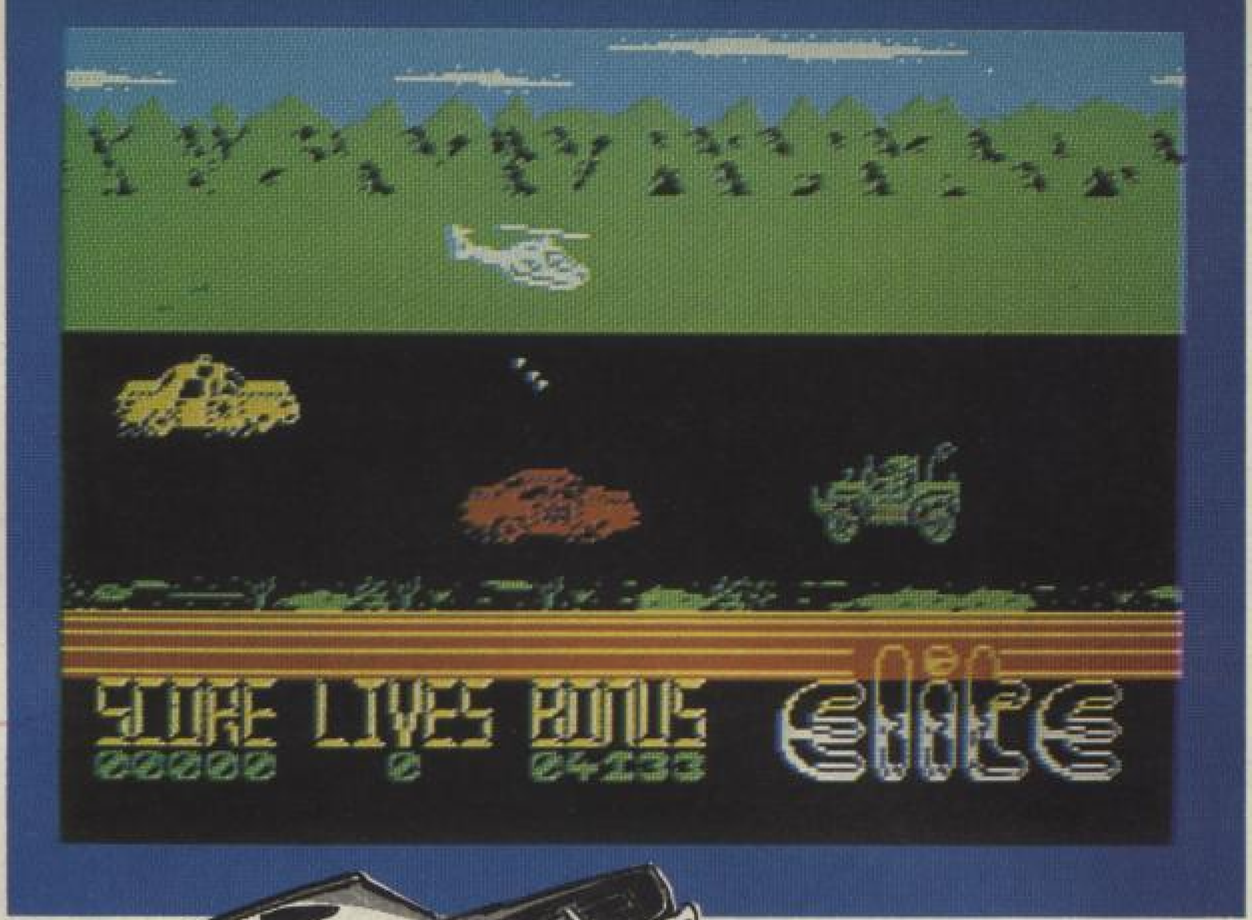
1. Broad Street does have a station but is it **a)** Underground or **b)** British Rail?
2. How many stations shown on the map have a name which begins with the letter **S**?
3. How many stations are called - - - - **PARK?**
4. Which station on the Underground has the largest number of railway lines running through it?
5. How many stops are there on the District Line?



Copyright London Regional Transport
London Regional Transport Underground Map Reg. User No. 85/E/281

Answers please on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope addressed to *BROAD STREET COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB* to arrive no later than first post *25th April*. The correct replies will go into the bag to be drawn.

DUKES OF HAZZARD



Producer: **Elite**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**

Here's another in the licenced TV series from Elite, the software house that specialises in putting the small screen on the small screen. Most players will surely know the TV series, so the scenario is simple to describe. Basically, Boss Hogg is up to his old tricks again and has threatened to seize the General Lee as collateral unless Bo and Luke come up with the £5000 they owe him. So they decide to enter the Annual Hazzard Cross Country Road Race to win the first prize of — guess what, yup it's £5000. Boss Hogg and the entire Hazzard County Police Force are revving up to stop them.

What we have here could basically be described as a 'Moon Buggy' game set on Earth. Instead of a moon buggy there is the boys' car, the General Lee. Instead of craters and mines the boys in their car have to avoid vehicles driven by the various nasties. These can be jumped over or destroyed by lobbing sticks of dynamite ahead of the car. Instead of alien flying saucers Jethro the ace-helicopter pilot flies over, firing down at them, followed by Jake in his aeroplane and Cletus the balloonist.

The screen shows the roadway (which varies in width) and the background landscape scrolling past, while the General Lee sits in the centre of the screen able to change lanes (up and down) and alter speed (which alters the scrolling speed effectively). Enemy vehicles approach from in front and behind. Again, like a 'Moon Buggy' type game, *Dukes of Hazzard* is played in stages, in this case from village to village. At the end of each stage the hazzards (!) increase. Scoring is by distance travelled and by the removal of hazards as well as a bonus score for each stage. The only obstacle that mustn't be destroyed is Daisy in her jeep.



CRITICISM

● 'There is something about Elite, I don't quite know what it is, but they seem to use the same scrolling routines for the last three games. It would be nice once in a while to have a bit of variety. As usual the graphics are up to a very high standard with a good parallax movement visible in the landscape, using large, bright, clear playing characters — probably the strongest side of Elite. When I heard *Dukes of Hazzard* was to be released, I wondered what sort of game they could produce around the TV series; it was proved that not much could be done with it and Elite have produced a game with no real game element in it. Do people really want continuously scrolling, jumping games where if you try to kill your opponents (computer) you stand a good chance of getting killed yourself? Isn't this a bit over the top? I found the only point to this game boils down to either killing the opponents or jumping them. People seem to like the 'Moon Buggy' games that this resembles, but here the actual game elements don't really work together to provide any lasting appeal, which is a shame, because it could otherwise have been quite a good game. An example can be made of *Dukes of Hazzard* to show that a well known TV title must not be allowed to sell a game when the game itself is not up to scratch, whereas Elite are trying to sell a game on the basis that it will be dangerous, exciting and action-packed, when this one is not.'

● *'It struck me immediately that a sense of excitement has been attempted by making the player keep hitting the accelerate key to keep up to speed (not hitting it slows you down), a kind of* DT Decathlon *idea. Actually this becomes irritating after a bit as it has little to do really with the game idea. Also you have to discover this fact for yourself, as it isn't mentioned in the inlay instructions. It has to be said that everything is excellently animated with nice bouncing wheels and characterful objects. The General Lee's leaps are athletic and if you are hit the way the car somersault's to a halt is good. But these are all peripherals to a good game, not a good game in themselves.* Dukes of Hazzard *disappoints with its lack of real excitement or objectives.'*

● 'Elite seem to be sticking to their TV series tie-ins. *Dukes* is quite a good game with graphics which are fairly smooth and detailed. Acceleration is achieved using the decathlon/Olympic game method ie, press like mad. This is good as as it makes you feel a part of the game. The actual game is playable but not quite as addictive. I enjoyed *Dukes* and I expect younger players will enjoy it even more. Originally I was rather sceptical of TV tie-ins assuming them to be gimmicks. Up to now most of them have been good games too. As long as this continues I shall continue to enjoy them.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: M to accelerate, SYM SHIFT (toggle) to change lane, X to jump and Z to throw
Joystick: Kempston and Sinclair 2 automatically detected
Keyboard play: responsive, although continually hitting the M key gets irritating
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent, good parallax feeling
Sound: below average spots effects, horn sound okay
Skill levels: 1, progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Screens: continuous scrolling
General rating: great graphics but not much game.

Use of computer	73%
Playability	58%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**63%**

NICOTINE NIGHTMARE

Producer: Atlantis
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: £2.99
Language: **machine code**

This is the Atlantis contribution to the anti-smoking campaign, not perhaps as revolutionary as banning smoking on the London Underground but it is just as frustrating. The first page of the program reproduces the Government health warning together with some spiel asking if the player was sincere in wanting to banish smoking from the face of the Earth. Replying 'N' results in nothing.

Before you can start the actual game you will be given a test to determine if you are the sort of person who could bear up while under the sort of pressure experienced by anti-smoking agents across the world. The literature explains that the first game is to test the player's 'strength of character and determination to stamp out the evil weed'. The game involves guiding a little man up and down the screen. There are five on each side of him, with the aid of watering cans he has to put out six cigarettes periodically returning to the bottom to refill with water. A little chap in red, the fiery devil, is dashing around like a lunatic re-lighting them, seemingly faster than the player can put them out. Should one of the cigarettes burn down then you have failed the test and will have to take a re-sit.

Should you make it past the first game then you will allowed out on your mission; to shut down the cigarette plant. First you must guide your man into the plant and through each of the departments. As you make your way you will have to avoid obstacles such as a cascade of cigaretts, water traps and revolving doors. On your journey you will be required to find the numerous switches that will eventually shut the plant down. As you discover each switch and turn it off the entrance to the next screen will be revealed. Each new stage of the game presents you with different obstacles, the switches become harder to find let alone get to. There is a little chap who will be trying to stop you in your endeavours, the factory manager, if you succeed he will lose his job so it's in his interests to interfere with you as much as he can. When the plant is closed down then you will have succeeded in your mission. Should you use up your five lives you will be awarded a score, this is given as a percentage and depends on the degree of damage inflicted.

CRITICISM

● 'This game is meant to encourage you to stop smoking, if you want to stop smoking then this is not the game for you. The first screen makes you so tense and frustrated that you will probably smoke a couple of packets. The factory is occupied by mutant cigarettes (a well known brand). I'm sure they plan to roll all over you as you are on the ramp. They constantly get closer together blocking your path to the switch. The game goes on like this getting increasingly difficult. The graphics on *Nicotine Nightmare* are pretty basic but sufficient to give it quite an attractive appearance although they move fairly blockily. This is a very simple idea but I don't know whether it's such a good idea to sell this game to children, after all cigarettes should be associated with over 16s. Saying this, it is still fun to play if slightly frustrating on the first few screens. An unusual game.'

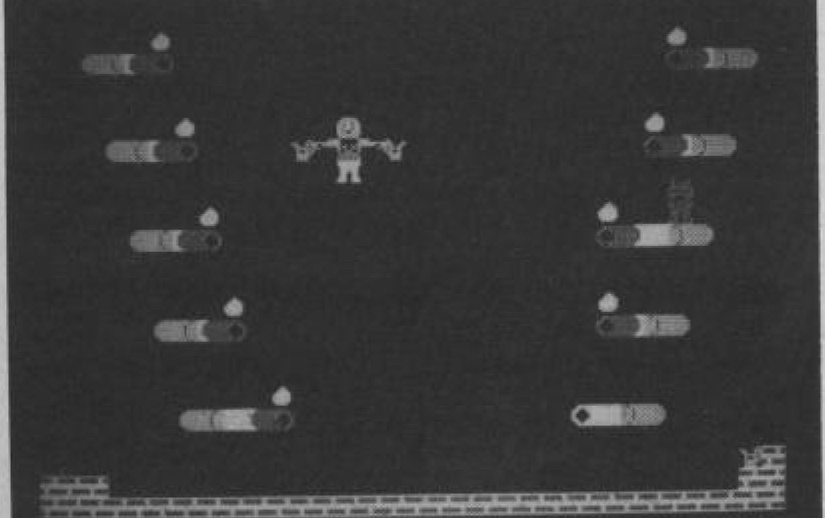
● 'Generally a fun game but it may have limited appeal. The first test is very difficult and soon becomes an annoyance. The main game has some nice action and original ideas but nothing about the game is stunning. I am satisfied that Nicotine Nightmare *is able to offer plenty of entertainment so for the price it could be worth mentioning.'*

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down M/N left/right SPACE to jump
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: M/N keys the wrong way round otherwise responds well
Use of colour: effective
Graphics: effective but basic
Sound: nothing adventurous here
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5in main game
Screens: scrolling screens
General rating: not a shattering game by any means but great fun to play, once you've mastered it.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	71%
Playability	78%
Getting started	84%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	88%
Overall	**78%**

Giving up the weed may be a nightmare but playing computer games can seriously damage your health



Help a Sadly Neglected Commodore Friend

AND EARN YOURSELF A FREE CRASH T-SHIRT

(Surely the old one must be wearing out by now!)

COMING SOON TO A NEWSAGENT NEAR YOUR FRIEND



Before we tell you about the new exciting Commodore 64 games review monthly ZZAP! 64 (we know it doesn't interest you) let's tell you why it does concern you. As a regular reader of CRASH you must know some friends who own a Commodore 64 computer, who have been moaning about the fact that as a Spectrum owner you get to read a magazine like CRASH. Now if you do know some underprivileged, almost magazine-less Commodore 64 owners, you could tell them about ZZAP! 64 and get them to subscribe. For every subscription we receive on the form below (or a photocopy) from your friends, you'll receive a free CRASH T-shirt worth £4.50!

Now we'll tell you about ZZAP! 64

The first issue of ZZAP! 64 is on sale from April 11th. Like CRASH, ZZAP! 64 will be packed with exciting features including:

- **Highly detailed reviews of all the latest 64 games**
- **Stacks of playing tips and game maps**
- **A special chart of readers' favourite games**
- **An adventure section by Steve Cooke** (*PCG*'s White Wizard)
- Hi-score pages with a bold challenge to top-scoring readers
- A regular column by 'Yak the Hairy' Jeff Minter
- Letters (and answers), news, gossip and competitions

ZZAP! 64 is monthly and costs **95p** from a newsagent, but your friends can get a discounted subscription with this form, and as a subscriber they'll be entitled to claim **50p off** any item they order from **ZZAP! 64 Mail Order**, which is run from the same department as CRASH Mail Order (same people in fact)! A subscription for 12 issues of ZZAP! 64 costs £14.50 (post included), but with this form it costs only **£10 (post included)** and the offer lasts until April 30th.

So if you don't know any Commodore 64 owners, now's the time to make friends! If you do, get them to subscribe and it's a free CRASH T-shirt for each one just for you.

This special offer lasts until April 30th 1985. For the coupon form to be valid it must be accompanied by the correct payment from your friend in cheque or postal order form. Cash is accepted but not recommended. As soon as we receive form and payment, your CRASH T-shirt will be despatched to you. Please ensure the form is fully completed.

My Commodore 64-owning friend would like to subscribe to the exciting new **ZZAP! 64** monthly magazine for **12** issues at the special 'friend of a CRASH Reader' discount price of **£10** (post included) instead of £14.50, and I should like to receive my **free CRASH T-shirt.**

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□TECH□NICHE□TECH□NICHE□TEC

This issue sees the start of a new corner in CRASH, the Tech Niche, which will appear every month, crammed full of news and reviews of gizmos you can bolt on to your trusty Spectrum. We'll also be taking a look at some of the things you can get up to with your Spectrum . . . other than play games, that is!

We'll be doing profiles on Utility programmers, reviewing utility packages and digesting the contents of a few technical-type books, which we'll tell you about. Hardware, including printers, disk drives, and all the peripherals that can turn your Speccy into something Specc-ial will be put under the Tech Niche microscope in due course, and there are plans for roundups on specific products like add-on keyboards, joystick interfaces and compilers (which go part of the way towards saving you the bother of writing in machine code).

In the next two issues the Tech Niche Team, aided and abetted by a professional musician and keyboard teacher, will be examining the ways you can compose, play and even learn music with your computer.

We hope to take a look at Modems and Micronet 800, and may even include a regular sub-Niche for communications freaks who can't resist making telephone calls with their computers.

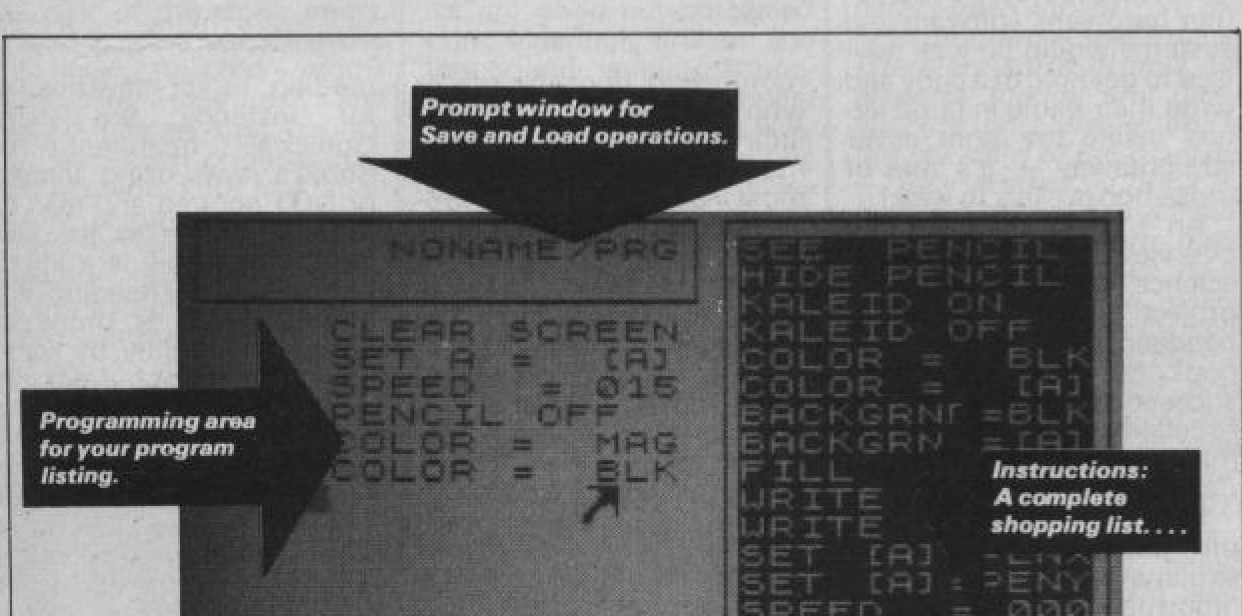
Who knows, robots and the kind of things they can get up to may prompt us to push our pens over paper in a while. The artistically minded among you will be pleased to hear that a review of graphics packages and input devices is already on the drawing board!

Maybe all the marketing men out there in the wide world, who've been wondering why we haven't written about their products as much as they'd like will be able to sleep more soundly in their beds at night once they've sent us their utilities and add-ons for scrutiny and evaluation. Don't say CRASH isn't a caring magazine, even if WE have to stay up nights to do it, Tech Niche will provide a forum for all that's happening away from the games front line.

And don't forget, dear readers, that we're here to serve your every whim. Well, a whim a week, at any rate. If you think there's some aspect of Spectrum ownership to do with hardware or non-games software that the Tech Niche Team should take a look at, drop us a line — we might even print the odd letter, you never know...

THE DESIGNER'S PENCIL

Producer: Activision
Retail price: **£9.99**



Finally, the first graphics designer with a musical flair has arrived. Activision's *The Designer's Pencil* not only displays drawing talent, but also delights with musical knowhow. If you're not careful, it will whistle all the time while it's being creative. If you're ready to create your first pop video show, read on....

The Designer's Pencil contains a graphics and audio language subset, which can be accessed entirely via cursor control either using the keyboard controls, Sinclair Interface 2, Kempston or cursor interface. Just point the cursor at the displayed command and press the action button. Just like an Ikon driven program without the Ikons....

The **Programming Screen** is divided into four main sections. Six small rectangles at the bottom of the screen represent the Master Commands which control the main activities. The scrolling instruction window displays the available graphics and audio instruction set ready for selection. The **Prompt Window** at the top left of the screen is the load and save work area. The rest of the screen is available for the current program listing.

If you've ever been in a supermarket, you'll find yourself at home with *The Designer's Pencil.* Just drive up with your cursor or shopping basket to the display shelf/instruction set and collect the desired item or items. The selected instructions are automatically listed in the programming area (no queueing at the pay counter!) and once the shopping list is complete, point the cursor to the RUN master command and the assembled program will run displaying your lack of drawing and musical talent.

There is no 'on live' design, in a manner similar to Logo the picture must be programmed indirectly and sequentially by creating a drawing file which can be subsequently run and checked. On RUN the Draw Page is displayed and the file is executed with the picture developing as if by magic to the accompaniment of any programmed sound effects. The picture can be saved on completion or reviewed at any time during further editing. Lines can be inserted, deleted or modified.

DRAWING FACILITIES

Most standard drawing functions are available: Clear Screen, Paper and Ink colour selection, Pencil on and off, Kaleidoscope on or off (mirroring in four quadrants), Circle, Fill, Text print, Drawing speed select and Arc drawing with a set radius. Extra to this comes the incredible range of musical commands which consist of NOTE followed by the pitch and octave.

Structured programming is also catered for with the help of labels, variables and an unconditional jump instruction. Subroutines are made possible with a jump to sub and a Return function. Program loops can be incorporated with a RECURSE A B command with variable B controlling the repeat cycle. Variables may be set with fixed, random or with current coordinate values and simple conditional branches allow further structuring. For debugging purposes two functions may be of some use: DEBUG A displays the value of the selected variable and VIEW X/Y the current values of the coordinates during RUN.

The picture or the draw file may be saved on tape or microdrive under a given file name. The picture also can be printed on a Spectrum compatible printer (ZX printer, Alphacom 32 etc.).

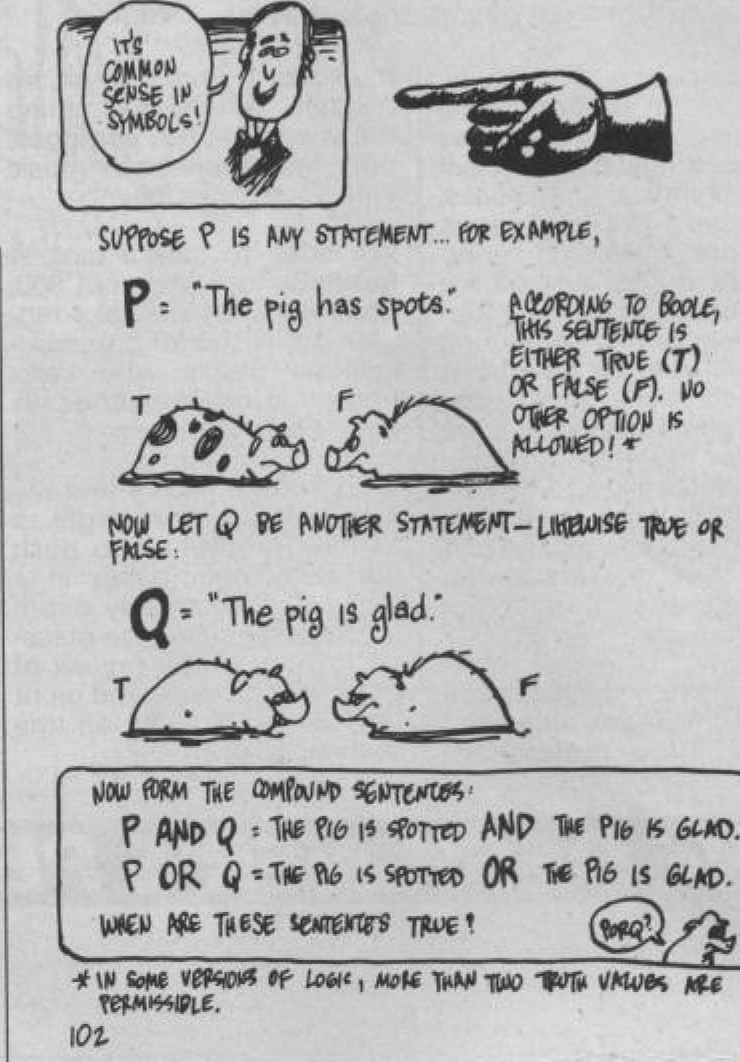
LIKES AND DISLIKES

The Designer's Pencil's use is very limited due to the lack of an immediate draw mode. Worst of all the cursor driven operation can drive anyone not only round the screen but also round the bend, as it simply takes hours moving the cursor up and down the instruction list or naming a file running up and down the alphabet. What looks like a good idea at first turns into a regular nightmare and anyone will wish for the good old-fashioned keyboard entry. The musical capability is very limited, but provides an extra dimension to the draw performance. *The Designer's Pencil* is a curious piece of programming, which should keep anyone intrigued for at least a couple of hours. . . .

A CRASH Smash

The Cartoon Guide to Computer Science

By Larry Gonick **£3.95**
Harper and Row



There's really no reason to remain in the dark about computers and computer science, even if the prospect of delving into amazingly complicated textbooks has so far proved too daunting.

Admittedly, there are a few beginner's guides currently available which try to take the pain out of approaching the subject, but all too often they are either downright patronising in tone or assume a certain level of pre-knowledge of their reader.

Larry Gonick's apparently humble paperback volume is truly a masterpiece of explanatory writing — and drawing. Anyone thinking about getting to grips with the theoretical side of computer hardware, software and systems would be well advised to get hold of a copy and write their name in large letters inside the front cover straightaway — it's one of those books likely to walk!

An all-encompassing overview of computer science is an ambitious project to embark on between the covers of one book, but Larry Gonick has succeeded, presenting an excellent mix of entertainment and education in his *Cartoon Guide*.

Split into three sections, the book begins with an explanation of the concept of 'information', which is what computers are very good at processing. Mr Gonick then takes his reader gently through number theory, explaining why computers use the binary system and how it works, on to the early days of hardware, presenting a potted history of computers. From that perspective the internal workings of hardware and microprocessor architecture are attacked. While this second section of the book ('Logical Spaghetti'!) requires a little more effort from the reader who may need to resort to a little pencil and paper work, it must be the least painful, most user friendly introduction to combinational logic ever written.

The concluding section 'Software' introduces a few fundamental aspects of programming, using BASIC for examples of constructions, and then wraps up with a glimpse of the kind of things that computers can be used for, given the appropriate programs.

Larry Gonick describes himself as 'an overeducated cartoonist'. He has certainly found the ideal way of sharing some of his excess education. The whole style of this book is appealing; the cartoons work as a foil to the text assisting the words to get the message across rather than acting as illustrations. The humour, contained in both the drawings and the text, serves to lighten the reader's task of taking in new concepts yet avoids trivialising the subject. Boolean algebra is 'light reading' to very few people, for instance, but Larry Gonick's treatment of Boole's laws, using spotted or NOT spotted and glad or NOT glad pigs as the first worked example is a joy to read. 'Essential Reading' is a phrase which is prone to being used lightly by some book reviewers: but not this one! Just go out and buy a copy of *The Cartoon Guide*, I promise you won't be able to avoid learning quite a lot about Computer Science if you do, and you'll be entertained in the process. I just wish Mr Gonick had got his act together years ago, when I started learning about computers — the accurate overview he presents in this book would have been invaluable in making everything I learnt drop into place in some sort of order.

The first book to be reviewed in these soon-to-be-hallowed pages, *The Cartoon Guide to Computer Science* also wins the accolade of the first book to be awarded a CRASH Smash. Nuff said?

Reviews

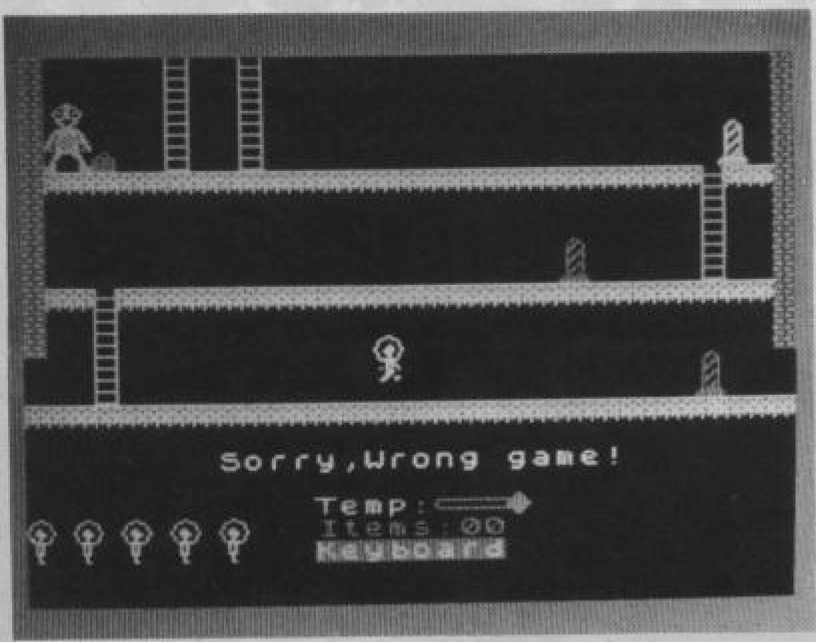
STAY KOOL

Producer: **Bug-Byte**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Leigh Hugill**



Space Pilot Luke Warm is stranded on his crippled spaceship after one of his less successful space battles. It isn't his day either; although the emergency space shuttle is ready to go he has neglected to keep the fuel rods on the shuttle. They are scattered about the stricken ship and Luke must be guided around to collect them all. Unfortunately (the key word in any computer game) the damaged ship has sent the various automated devices wild. Can Luke avoid the nasties, collect all the rods and be ready in the shuttle bay before the damaged ship falls into the nearby star?

Stay Kool is another *JSW* clone, but this one does not aim to let Willy go, even providing a room called 'We must perform a . . . WHAT?' as part of the clone effect. The ship is formed of a series of interconnected rooms containing platforms, and varied nasties that bounce up and down or slide from side to side. Luke is a small white figure in a large fishbowl helmet with a healthy jumping ability. Items to be collected flash. Below the playing area can be seen the title of the room, number of items collected, rising temperature and lives which convert into winged angels after deaths. Among the features of the game there are tractor beams which force Luke to rise along with them, teleport rooms and amongst all of this 50-screen game there is a Loch Ness Monster!



CRITICISM

● 'I always thought it was Bug-Byte's policy to release only very good games such as *Turmoil* and *Rapscallion*. But *Stay Kool* isn't up to their normal standard. The graphics are good but but aren't mind-blowingly brilliant and the sound is almost non-existent. The idea is similar to *Manic Miner*t*Jet Set Willy* but the actual game isn't up to the standard of these games. *Stay Kool* is definitely not addictive and because of this I found that it wasn't very playable. It may appeal to people who especially like platform games but to the everyday gamer it's really a bore. Overall not up to the standard of other Bug-Byte games and certainly not one of the all time greats.'

● *'There's no doubt in my mind that this game will be compared to* Jet Set Willy, *and in fact it makes little attempt to disguise the similarity. The screen layout is so much like* Jet Set Willy *in the sense that two-thirds of the screen has been used as the playing area and the bottom third as a text and information area; it wouldn't even surprise me if the same screen display routines hadn't been copied from the host program at some point. There are some distinct differences though and probably the most obvious one is the standard of the graphics — they are not as good by half and they flicker considerably. Graphics are quite varied and well drawn, however, and the game makes full use of the colour capabilities of the Spectrum, but it is disappointing to see how many character blocks are left undisguised which gives an unpleasantly chunky feel to the game. There doesn't seem to be much sound maybe because it would slow the game down even further. I can't see why Bug-Byte has published this game as it is nowhere near their previous high standard.'*

● 'It's difficult at this late stage to say whether yet one more *JSW* copy is playable or not. After all, if a game is good, it doesn't matter if it looks like something else, but after so many versions one does get a bit tired and therefore the copy has to be very good. *Stay Kool* is not a good copy, and its humorous

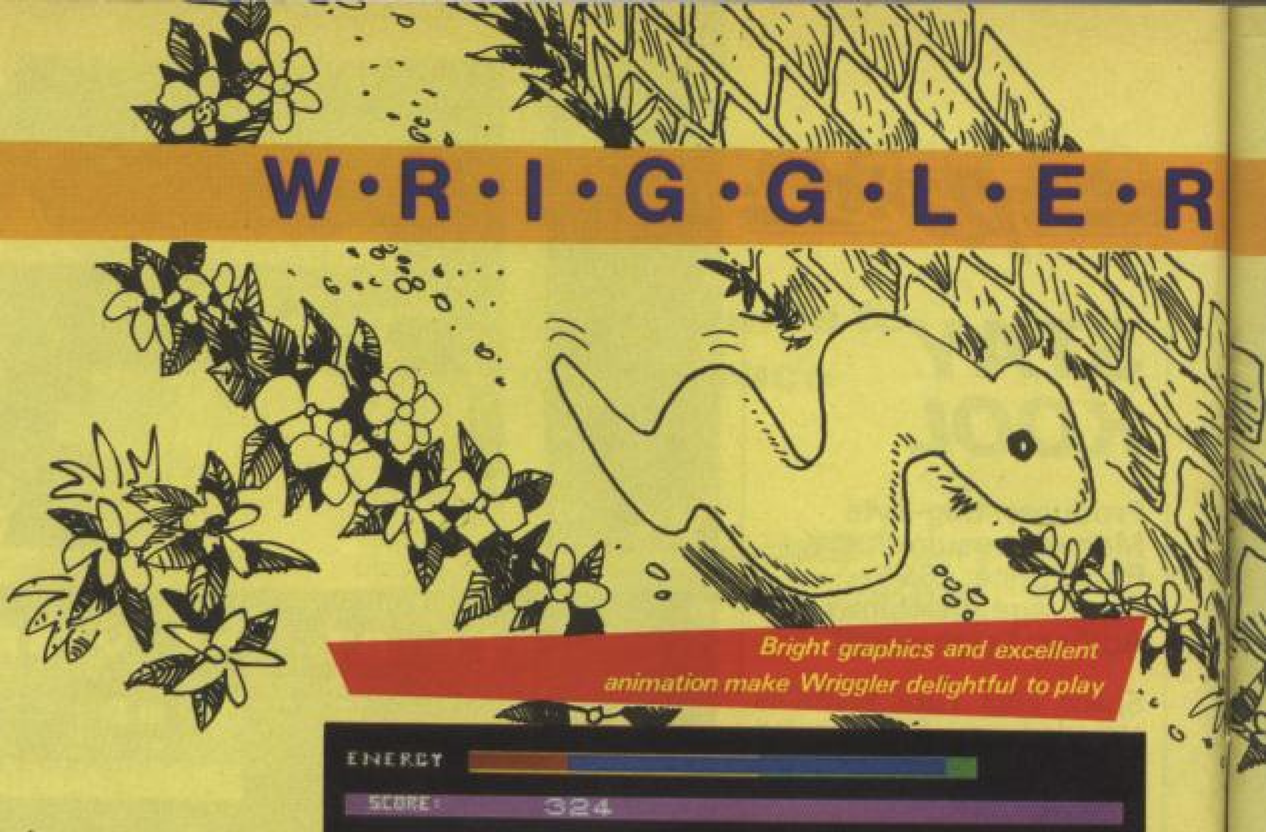


attempts to copy the Matthew Smith literary screen style is not particularly appreciated either. The pace of the game seems slow and generally the idea is uninspiring, in other words, it offers nothing new to the type like *Technician Ted* or *Brian Bloodaxe*. A surpsise really, coming from Bug-Byte and a disappointment.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W left/right, B to SPACE to jump
Joystick: Sinclair 2 and Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: above average
Sound: poor and not much in the way of spot effects
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: 50
General rating: an average platform style game with little to offer over other versions.

Use of computer	76%
Graphics	69%
Playability	64%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	54%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**59%**

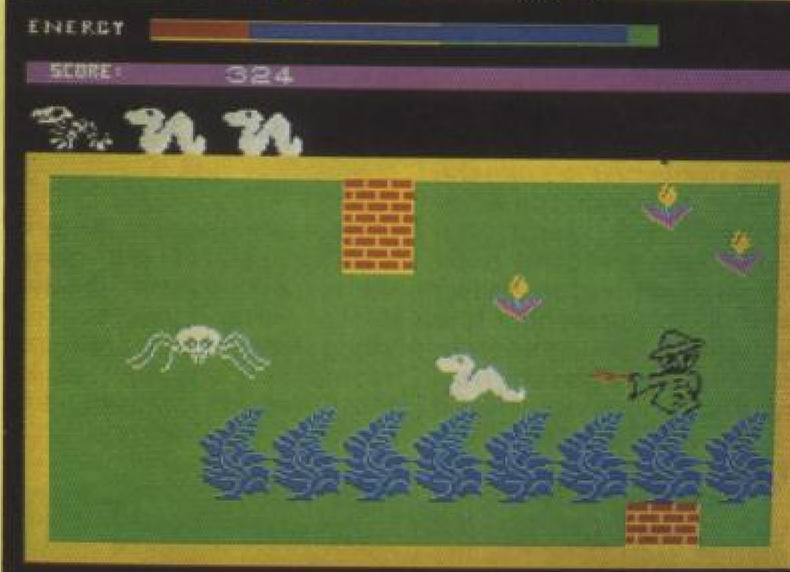


W·R·I·G·G·L·E·R

WRIGGLER

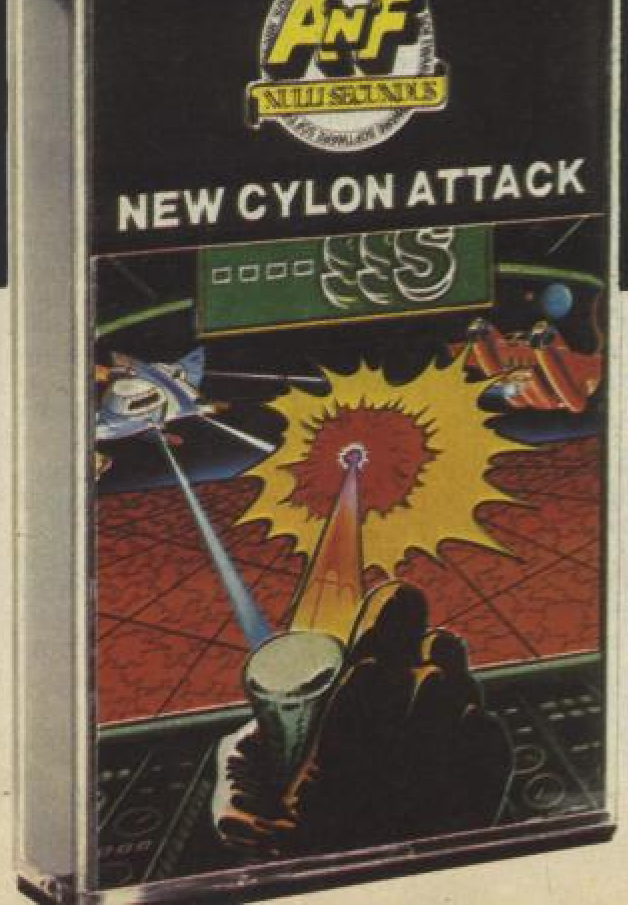
Producer: **Romantic Robot**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

Bright graphics and excellent animation make Wriggler delightful to play

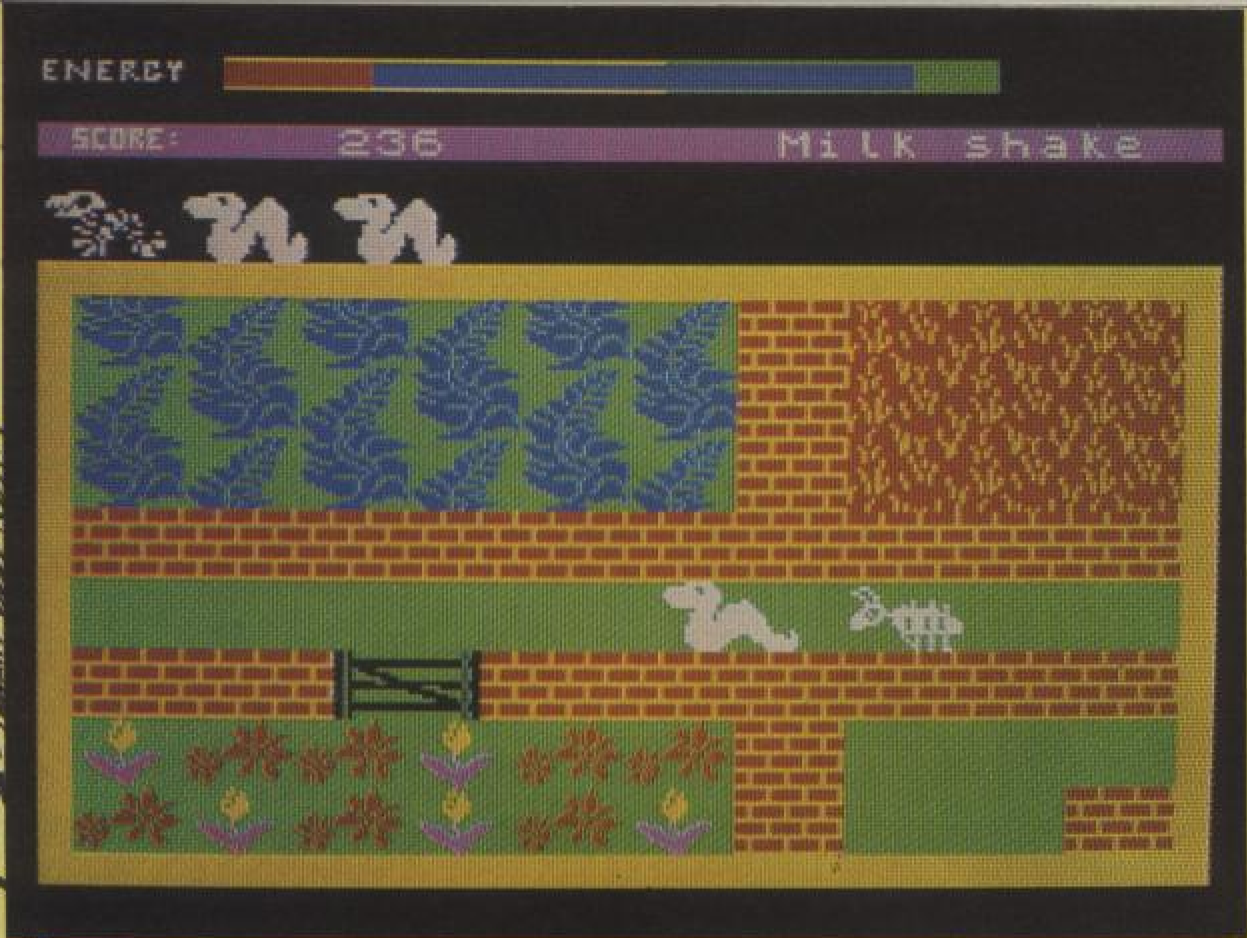


Wriggler is a maze game, or it could be an arcade game — well it might even qualify as an adventure of sorts. The simple truth is that *Wriggler* is all of these, and in some respects resembles *Antics*, the insectoidal game by Bug-Byte. The opening screen shows four maggots at the start of a race, and you are one of them — you know it's a race because of the ant with the starting pistol, but you are not racing against the other maggots as they disappear soon after the race starts to become your extra lives.

The game seems simple enough to play, all that's required is for you to guide your maggot down pathways until you find your way out of the maze and into the next, and the next, and the next. . . . In fact there are four main mazes, the first one being the Garden, followed by the Scrublands, the Underground (or Hell if life is rotten to you as well), and finally the Mansion with the lift shaft that should take you







Pursued by a white ant, it's best to wriggle as fast as possible!



to the planet surface. There are a few other areas but if you find yourself in any of these then you goofed and life can only get worse.

If this all sounds pretty straightforward, the fine print begins to make being a maggot sound less attractive. The first problem you will have to cope with is your diet; as maggot winds his way around the maze he uses up energy. This can be replenished by consuming many of the snacks left around. The menu includes such gourmet delights as milk shakes, bowls of cherries and cups of tea; should you be fairly well stocked with energy (a fact which is indicated by a bar code at the top of the screen) you can always pick up a snack and eat it later.

As well as food there are a few other objects that you will need in order to penetrate the mazes and these include tins of ant spray, keys, extra lives and a parachute. All these are essential for dealing with one situation or another, but you are only allowed to carry one object at a time, so you can imagine your despair as you fall the 1000 feet to the Underworld when you remember that you swapped your parachute for a bag of money.

Finding you way out of the mazes is one thing, getting past all the nasties in there is another. Your first encounter will be with the black or blue ants — fairly timid creatures these, if you stay out of their way they won't harm you, collide with them and you lose energy which may be fatal. The white ants are a lot more unpleasant as they will chase you and any encounter nearly always ends badly for you. The only way of get-



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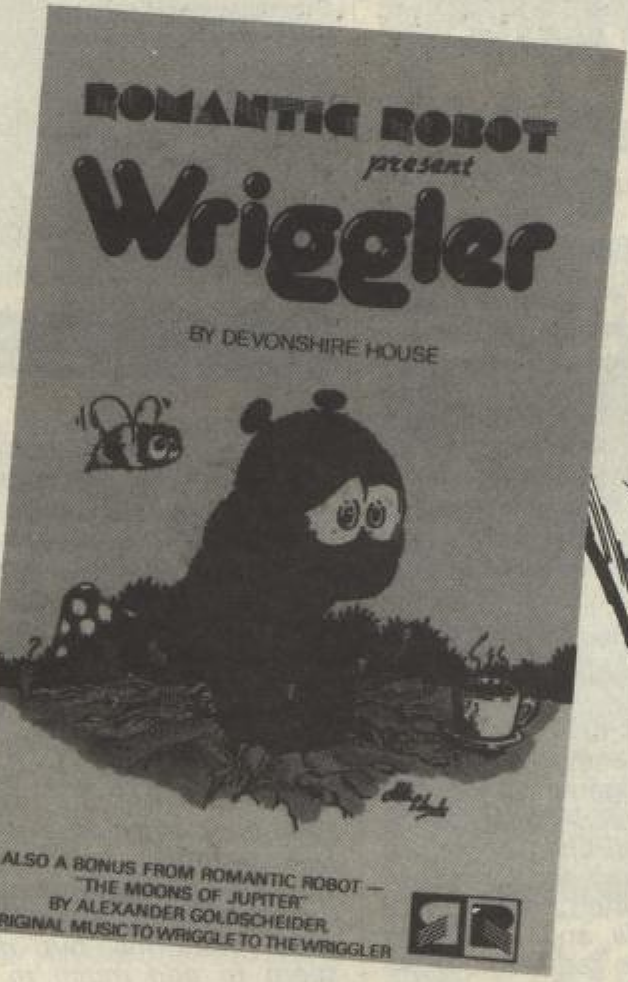
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W·R·I·G·G·L·E·R

ting past them successfully is to use the ant spray. Other creatures generally have the same effect as the coloured ants, all except for the spider, a wonderfully animated creature but very deadly. Death itself is followed by a quickie funeral conducted on the spot. Should you have any lives left, resumption is from the same spot.

Wriggler takes place across 256 playing screens as you fight for survival in the Maggot Marathon to end them all, with the final object being to reach the planet surface. Points are awarded for picking up objects and eating food. When your energy level reaches a critical point on the bar at the top, the computer emits anxious beeps to remind you.



CRITICISM

● 'This is Romantic Robot's first excursion into the games world, and if all their games are up to this standard they could soon be amongst the top software houses. *Wriggler* is a totally original game, I certainly can't think of another where you control a maggot anyway! The graphics are good and the animation of some of the creatures is excellent, have a look at the spider. Sound and colour are both used well. *Wriggler* is a fun game to play and offers hours of enjoyment to all, in fact of the games I've seen recently, this is one of the most enjoyable I've played. Overall, a very good game worth buying.'

● 'Wriggler *is an original game which has some very neat graphics and it is very different from anything I have seen before, except perhaps* Antics *which it slightly resembles at first. To be able to combine arcade features so well with adventure aspects and throw in a dash of strategy is an exceptional idea and although it has been done before, it seems to work especially well with this game. Colour has been put to good use throughout and does add that lively element that so many games miss out these days. Animation is very good too and I especially like the way the huge spider creeps forward ready to pounce, and the way 'you' wriggle about this huge nightmare of a maze (well aren't all mazes nightmares)? I think this game presents quite a task and whether it will keep your interest really depends on what the other mazes have to offer — it's difficult enough that I have yet to escape from the Garden. Sound isn't too bad either, with some nice tunes. STOP PRESS — I'm in Hell now!!'*

● 'I must confess that my first impression of *Wriggler* was not a good one, I thought it was going to be rather dull. I was very wrong. The feature that attracted me the most, apart from the graphics and animation, was how the different elements, maze, arcade and adventure, combined to make this an absorbing game. The graphics, animation and choice of colour are superb, helping to make the display clear and uncluttered. At first I thought the movement was rather slow but when the action starts it's best to have your wellies warmed and ready, your thinking cap on and your ant spray armed. *Wriggler* is very hard to win but the graphics alone make the challenge worth surmounting. I never thought I would enjoy spending so much time as a maggot.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W or O/P left/right, K/M or Q/A up/down, L,M,T or zero to pick up drop, alternatively QWERT or the cursors
Joystick: Sinclair 2, Kempston, cursor type, Micro Power add-on
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: lively, well drawn, superbly animated and smooth
Sound: good tunes, reasonable spot effects
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4 with possibility of finding extra ones
Screens: over 250
General rating: a different, lively and absorbing maze game which everyone found more addictive than they first thought.

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	90%
Playability	91%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	86%
Value for money	89%
Overall	90%

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**

We have had to wait quite a while now for a Micromega release, and *A Day in the Life* represents something of a departure for the company. There must be a finite limit to the developments a software house can make in games technology, given a particular machine, and Micromega have certainly gone a long way. Now with this new game there seems to be a sense of looking back, for *A Day in the Life* is not a super 3D advance, but actually a mixed collect-and-run game.

You play a very familiar character, no less than Clive Sinclair — definitely plain Clive, because the object of the game is to keep him alive long enough to get to the palace to be knighted by the Queen. The action takes place over 13 screens of varied action. As it is a day in the life, the game starts out with Clive getting out of bed. Throughout the game you have to collect one object to make a second appear, and when that has been collected you can exit the screen. On the first it is a coat, then the door key. The screens are laid out in such a way that a circuitous route is forced upon you, while objects or people get in your way or kill you off.

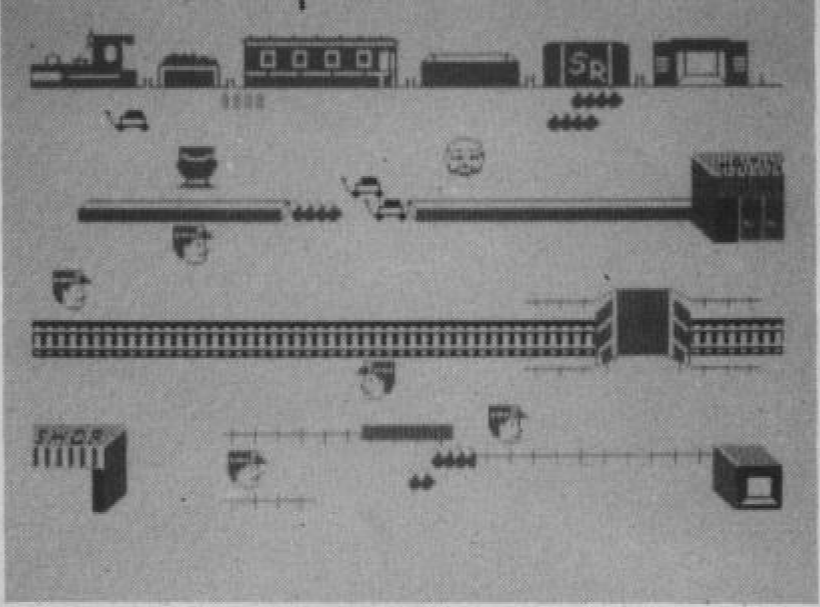
After a screen or two you may notice that in some respects this game does have a development in it — it is a story told in pictures. Once out of the house Clive has to visit a couple of shops before going to the station to visit the Autobank, go back to collect his forgotten umbrella, then dash onto the already leaving train. The train takes him to another station which is dangerously crowded to visit another shop to buy a copy of the Financial Times and back to the train before it leaves the station. Each screen has its own time limit, in the case of the last two it is the slowly departing train — will you make it in time? The train disembarks at a London station, not far from the Underground, but first there is the busy bar to visit, the bank and fast food joint before dashing for the Tube to the Palace.

The moving objects on each screen are so arranged to move in patterns, bouncing off each other in unpredictable ways to make life harder. Quite often it takes a few moments to suss out actually how to move about the screen. Should you survive to the Palace you will be rewarded with a lowering of the royal sword and a knighthood.

CRITICISM

● 'I admit to a softspot for Micromega after giving us wonderful games like *Deathchase, Full Throttle, Code Name Mat* and others, so you can imagine my sense of letdown when I loaded *Day in the Life* and saw what looked like rather old fashioned, even boring graphics, and found that the game was incredibly simple in play. What had happened?! On screen one 1 felt like screaming — the movement of Clive is very finicky and you have to position him precisely. Old fashioned and frustrating, I thought. But the strange thing is that after playing for about half an hour the damned thing began to grow on me — and not just because of Micromega. Actually, *Day in the Life* turns out to be an amusing, difficult and strangely attractive game. Attractive in the sense that the graphics are very unusual, well drawn and although not massively animated, there is a lot of detail in them. 'You', Clive, are just the well known, bearded face — very characterful in fact. Well I can't in all honesty say that this is the follow up from Micromega to all those other titles I listed before, but it is still a different and interesting game which requires some patience at first and a deal of timing skill to get through.'

● *'It's unusual for Micromega to put out a game like this, they usually deal with hi-tech space age games. But then again, I suppose you've got to part from the theme at some point. At first glance at this game it looks very boring to play and unattractive. Playing the game reveal a few more items — quite a few things to do to keep you busy, but nothing terribly exciting. After playing the game for about an hour I became quite bored with it. Moving Clive about is a very fiddly job and you need to be precisely positioned to get into the gaps, which does become frustrating when you constantly lose lives. The graphics move very smoothly at varying speeds, they are well detailed and quite colourful, but don't seem to add much to the game. Continuous (if you can call it that) music varies in speed depending on how many characters are on screen — not very good programming. To sum this game up it is definitely not up to Micromega's high standards, and although I found it quite playable I would not recommend it — I have come to expect more of Micromega.'*



Clive leaps off a comuter train to buy some essentials from the shop, but there's never a C5 around when you need one

● 'Normally Micromega games are a joy to play but *AD ay in the Life* doesn't rate as well as their other games. The graphics are poor and not a patch on the graphics used in *Full Throttle.* Sound is all right but nothing to shout about. The game isn't playable and certainly not addictive. This is really a big dissapointment coming from Micromega and I hope they never release an other game like this!!'

COMMENTS

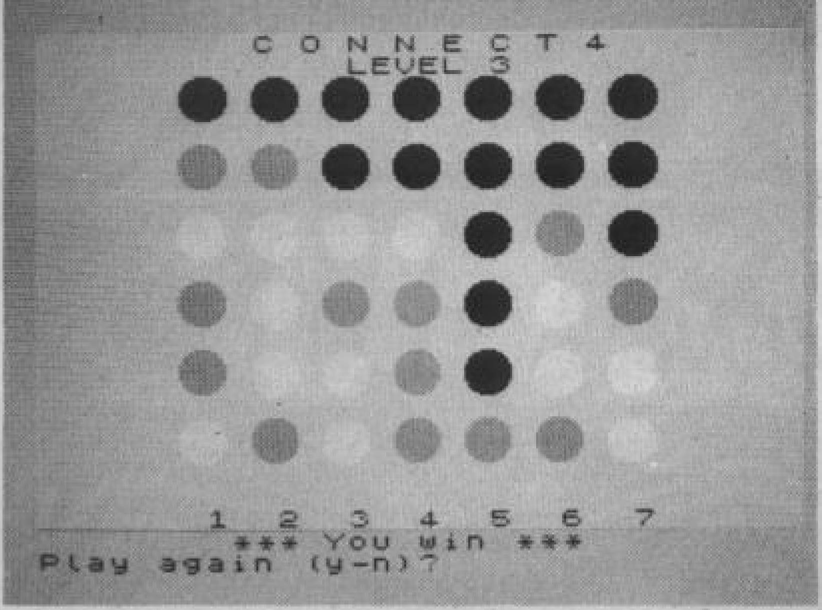
Control keys: user-definable, four directions needed
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2, Cursor type
Keyboard play: responsive, but finicky in movment
Use of colour: good, bright colours on a generally white ground
Graphics: above average
Sound: continuous but jerky beep music
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: 13
General rating: slightly mixed feelings, but generally felt to be above average.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	69%
Playability	50%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	51%
Value for money	52%
Overall	**59%**

CON-NECT 4

Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**

Connect 4 is simply a computer version of the well known plastic wall divider with holes around which the family crowd all screaming in unison as one player's counters complete a line of four. The package states that '*Connect 4* is a board game for 2 players or for one player against the computer. When playing against the computer there are four levels of difficulty. . . .' When you load the program the opening screen tells a different story in so much as the only option is to play the computer, which is not really an option at all. After you have digested the 8 lines of instructions you are invited to press any key whereupon the display shows a blue board with black holes, numbered one to seven along the bottom. The prompts appear under the board in a yellow border, the first one asks for a difficulty level, again this is at variance with the cassette case as you



That's a winning line of four counters for the player, but try it again on a higher skill level and the computer will probably win

are only offered a choice of 1 to 3. The next choice is whether you would like to play first or second, having made that decision you can begin to play the game. If you select the computer to play first you will see a green counter drop past all of the other holes accompanied by some rather elaborate noises. Your turn: answer the prompt with a number that corresponds to the column of your choice and a white counter will fall into place. The computer responds with the witty message 'I'm thinking . . .' the length of time the message remains will depend on the level of play you have chosen but that can be as long as ten seconds.

The object of the game is to be first in getting a straight line of four counters vertically, horizontally or diagonally, and of course trying to prevent the computer from doing do. If the computer wins it simply says so and plays a little jingle offering you a choice of another game. The routine is exactly the same if the player wins, only the message is different.

CRITICISM

● 'It's nice to see a game that is quite popular beeing translated onto the computer. The drawback to the conventional game is that you need two people to play it, and how often do you find a partner when you want one? Well this game solves that problem as you play the computer, which is good at winning on the higher levels, but gives you a good chance on the lower levels. Graphically it could not be better, well after all, it is only coloured counters! There are no difficult inputs, just one key press for each go, this enables younger children to play the game without any hardship whatsoever. I must say that I enjoyed this game and at £1.99 it's cheap enough to put away and collect dust between plays like the original, but it's much more compact in the cupboard!'

● *'The package asks, 'Will you be the first to CONNECT 4?' Yes I was every time. I discovered the best way to play this rather banal game was to adopt the USAF tactics used during the Vietnam War, drop as many bombs over as wide an area as you can and sooner or later you are bound to score.'*

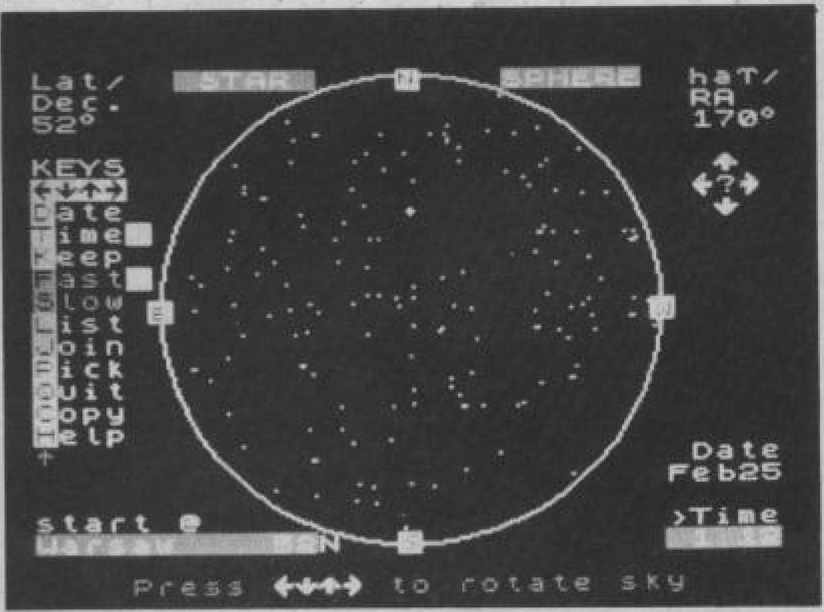
● 'It's a pity you can only play against the computer only because the inlay suggests two players may fight it out with each other, but on the other hand the advantage of the computer is that you can play on your own if you wish. I can't see *Connect 4* being big among the traditional computer games player, but for families with younger children it is ideal, simply and well implemented, graphically unexciting but adequate — a straightforward game at a sensible price.'

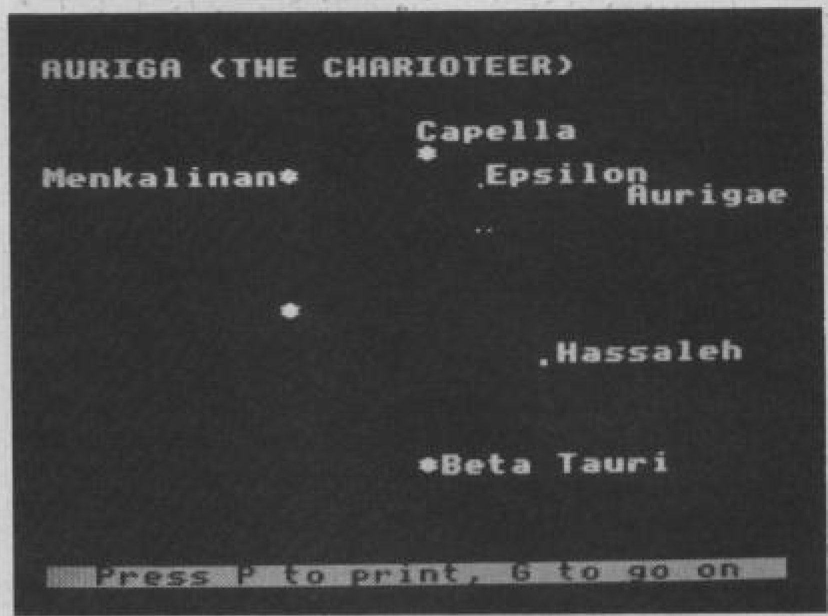
COMMENTS

Control keys: numeric input 1—7
Joystick: not necessary
Keyboard play: simple, although thinking time can be slow
Use of colour: yellow, white and green
Graphics: hardly applicable
Sound: just a few beeps
Skill levels: 3
General rating: at the price a worthy, simple family game.

Use of computer	N/A
Graphics	N/A
Playability	74%
Getting started	48%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	80%
Overall	72%

REVIEW OF THE HEAVENS





STARSPHERE

Producer: **Eclipse Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Author: **JM Whiteman**

Like *Astronomer*, *Starsphere* is able to plot and draw a map as seen from one of the 60 pre-selected city locations or from a chosen position at any latitude and longitude, viewed at any time. While these maps are plotted much more quickly than those in *Astronomer*, they are not very detailed, but this may not be important if you simply want to observe the position of the main constellations and the patterns that they form. *Starsphere* gives a map of the entire night sky rather than through a window and this view can be rotated through **18** increments to show how the patterns change with the passage of time. The decision is clear; is the loss of detail compensated for by this effective rotating planetarium effect?

Starsphere can plot 355 stars in 45 constellations as opposed to *Astronomer*'s 1090 stars in 79 constellations. The program is very simple to use as all the options are menu-driven and the one touch system makes the selection of options pleasant and quick.

SPACE SCAN

Producer: **MacMillan**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Author: **JM Hargreaves**

This is another pure educational program. It will not produce star maps as such but instead produces rather simple maps to demonstrate the shape and position of any one of 15 constellations which can be viewed under option One, which produces a slide show effect. The maps are annotated to name the important stars and to demonstrate how they form patterns. After the constellation has been plotted you are asked if you require any further information; answer **Y** and the lines of text appear at the bottom of the screen. Should the text refer to particular stars, then they will flash to make their position known, followed by an interesting fact or two, eg 'if Betelgeuse occupies the position of our sun, then it would reach beyond the orbit of earth and Mars'.

Option three gives access to a menu of 75 stars. Each one has a page showing which constellation it is in, the type of star it is and its distance in light years from the Sun. If any technical terms are used in the description you will find a cross reference to the glossary section accessed by Option Five. This option only holds explanations for ten technical names, but the explanations are useful.

Option Four accesses a quiz to test your knowledge on constellations and stars. The questions are not as searching as those in *Stargazer*. The graphics and writing have been designed to aid viewing, the colours chosen greatly enhance the clarity. The method of menu selection can be a little clumsy, again the programmers have not used the one touch system throughout and performing the same function on different pages, such as returning to the menu, will require different key presses depending on the mode you are in, this can make the package slightly more confusing to use. On the whole a useful package for getting the basics across to an audience.



THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Producer: **Eaglesoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£3.50**
Author: **D Mainprize**

As the title suggests this program deals only with our own Solar System, which it defines on the first page to 'include all objects captured by the gravity of our Sun.' The first page of the program presents a menu listing the first eleven options which are allocated to the Sun and the planets.

Select any of those options and you will be given one or two pages on that topic. The information is very compressed and it is best described as a beginners' basic guide, at which level the information is interesting. The text is combined with diagrams that, in the case of the Sun show its structure, or for the planets their position and size in relation to the earth. The information given with the planet text includes the diameter, orbit and rotation periods, moons and distance from the Sun. The other information that can be called up includes a diagram showing all of the planets in their relative positions, and basic information on asteroids and comets. This package does deal with the constellations, but only with ten of them and all it really does is to map them out in isolation to show the prime star in each case.

One final option is the seemingly obligatory quiz but really I feel that this program is nearer a pure educational package, so the quiz is essential.

The layout of the program is neat though unspectacular. The menu system was crude as the user has to enter a number and then press ENTER, a system that is at variance with that used by the other packages and is prone to errors, small point, perhaps, but in an educational environment these packages have to be idiot resistant.

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Crash back

Among recent letters we have received there has been an indication that CRASH BACK was more popular than we thought. So here we go again this time with BEN STONE and ROBIN CANDY taking a look back at the good games from Issues 5 and 6 to see if the reviews and the games stand the test of time.

Psytron

(Beyond)

Psytron was Beyond's first hit for the Spectrum, after a less than auspicious start with *Space Station Zebra* (reviewed issue 4). It was hailed by Beyond as 'A program which makes other programmers gasp' this may have not been so (ask Simon Brattel from Design Design) but all who laid eyes upon it thought it was great. Except maybe a couple of conned reviewers who have been dying to get their own back.

designed and ... very addictive and overall excellent value for money. Highly recommended.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	93%
Playability	88%
Getting started	98%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	88%
Overall	91%

● As a result of reading the CRASH review (which I had no part in writing) I promptly went out and bought the damned thing. As soon as I opened the huge box I wished I hadn't, a twenty page booklet lay there waiting to be read and understood. On playing *Psytron* for the first time I found it slow and a bit monotonous. 8 months later my view of the game hasn't really changed. More a case of nice graphics shame about the game.
BS

● *I remember buying this game and thinking it looked terrific, but on loading the game and playing it for a few goes I found it totally and utterly boring. True the graphics were brill, but graphics maketh not a game. Sound was used well and the speed with which the 10 panoramic views appeared was marvellous but I couldn't help feeling that there was something missing, maybe it was the fact that the game started off pretty boring and it took quite a while to work up to the more exciting levels. Overall I thought* Psytron *was pretty looking but there wasn't enough action going on straight away.*
RC



(Ben) I wouldn't change the 'Use of computer' rating or the 'Graphics' rating. But as for 'Playability' I would knock that down to about 75-ish as it got very monotonous after level 2. 'Getting started' would be altered to about 70 because the booklet takes some getting into and you have to play each level 5 times before you can progress to the next. 'Addictive qualities' wouldn't really be altered much only about 3 to 4 per cent knocked off and the 'Value for money' rating would be somewhere around the 75 mark.

(Rob) Most of the ratings still stand but I would certainly alter the 'Playability' to about 68 and the 'Addictive qualities' right down to about 57 otherwise the rest are okay.



Blade Alley

(P.S.S.)

Blade Alley is a 3D shoot em up a sort of 'Buck Rogers' game. The object of the game is basically to shoot anything that moves and if it doesn't move shoot it anyway. Strangely enough, though, despite it getting a good rating in the review it has never been very popular on the hotline which is normally a reflection of how good a game is

which should prove addictive.

Use of computer	82%
Graphics	87%
Playability	86%
Getting started	81%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	86%
Overall	85%

● I didn't see *Blade Alley* when it was first released (we weren't CRASH reviewers at that time) but looking at it now I've decided that I don't really like it. I think it's got something to do with the annoying tune and the keyboard layout that seems to have your hands tied up in knots. The 3D effect is quite good but it's not a patch on the newer 3D games like *Starstrike, Darkstar* etc.
BS

Zig Zag

(DK'Tronics)

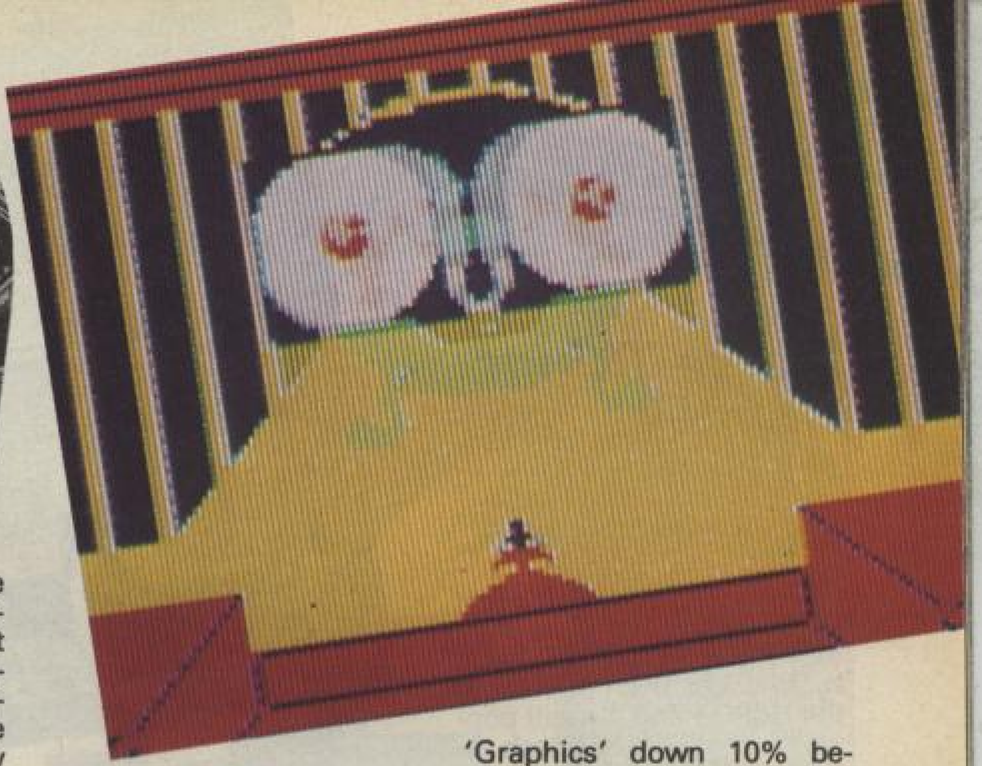
Zig Zag has been DK'Tronics' biggest hit so far but they've got some more games in the pipeline. The object of the game is to wander around the maze hunting for these poor innocent little creatures called Scarabaqs (I know it's a stupid name but I'm sure there is a perfectly logical explanation for it). Once you've found one of these little thingies then you've got to trap it in a corner and interrogate them to get part of a code to proceed to higher levels in the game. If you are near a Scarabaq then an indicator flashes or if you've got a Currah Microspeech attached you are told verbally. On later levels Hoverdroids pop out of alley ways and shoot at you which drains your energy but you can destroy them just by shooting an interrogator at them.

● *Zig Zag* was one of those games that has very nice 3D graphics but wasn't terribly playable or addictive. After a few games I'd just about completed it and I was becoming increasingly bored

Screens: continuous scrolling
Features: Currah Microspeech compatible
General rating: very unusual, addictive and good value.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	88%
Playability	85%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	84%
Overall	85%

with the whole thing. The constant drone of the Vectrakker (the backpack that houses all of your interrogating and navigation equipment) got right up my nose and on top of that I only saw one Hoverdroid.
BS



Zig Zag *was a very playable game though there wasn't much going on. The graphics were great with the 3D maze scrolling wonderfully and the little Scarabaqs were so cute, I especially liked the way their eyes popped out when you zapped them for a second time. The idea of the game is so simple that you can get into it on your first go without much bother, though I think it wouldn't take long for an average games player to complete it or very nearly complete it. Sound and colour are both used well and overall I think I still like it.* Zig Zag *is a very good game for people who aren't too good at games in general or for beginners who want start off with something that isn't too complex. Overall I think I* Zig Zag *is a great game and could keep you up until the early hours of the morning chasing those lively Scarabaqs.*
RC

(Ben) I would change most of the ratings. 'Use of computer' down 12% to 73, 'Graphics' down 10% because there is no variation in them, it's always the same view. Both the 'Playability' and 'Addictive qualities' would suffer because I lost interest in a very short time and I found it a bit boring just chasing Scarabaqs all the while

(Rob) I don't think I would change many of the ratings because I think it's one of the best 3D maze games around. The 'Graphics' would go down by say about 5% but the 'Playability' would go up by about the same. All the other ratings still stand

Antics

(Bug Byte)

Antics as all good bees know is the sequel to *The Birds and the Bees* (which Matthew Smith did the graphics for). The basic aim of the game is to rescue Boris Bee (star of *TBATB*) from an ants nest in which he has been imprisoned. As Boris's cousin Barnabee you must penetrate the lower depths of the nest and rescue him and bring him back to the surface. Inhabiting the nest are beetles and ants (naturally) which steal pollen and stamina from you, if you don't have any stamina or pollen left then Barnabee dies. Both pollen and stamina can be replaced by visiting the various flowers that live in the nest.

● *Antics* was a very good game with super graphics, brill sound, terribly addictive and very playable. But now 8 months later I think it's lost some of its original appeal. It gets very boring after a couple of games and the tune now drives me up the wall, though I do like the hi-score table it even had Danger Mouse and Penfold in it.
BS

● *Most people seem to have agreed with the review of* Antics *because it was in the Hotline charts for so long. Looking at it now I'm not at all surprised the graphics are still good and I think if* Antics *was released now it would either be a Crash Smash or very near one. Sound is used well throughout the game with a tune continuously playing.* Antics *has stood the test of time well and it will continue to do so for a very long time. Undoubtedly a classic.*
RC

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	90%
Playability	92%
Getting started	87%
Addictive qualities	92%
Originality	87%
Value for money	90%
Overall	90%

(Ben) I wouldn't really change the ratings much, maybe lower the 'Playability' and 'Addictive qualities' down to 85-ish otherwise the rest still stand.

(Rob) The ratings shouldn't really be changed at all it was a Crash Smash and deservedly so.

● *Of all the early 3D games I think that* Blade Alley *was the best. Though I don't think it would rate highly nowadays for its time it was marvellous. The graphics while good are a trifle boring when compared with the likes of* Knightlore *and* Starstrike *but they worked; better to have simple 3D graphics with few attribute problems than pretty things which just end up as a flashing blob at one end of the screen. The sound was quite good and with the addition of the Currah Microspeech the sound was even better. The hardest thing to do on* Blade Alley *was lining your ship up with the enemies to shoot them but after you mastered this there wasn't a lot to the game. I quite liked* Blade Alley *but it's very dated now.*
RC

(Ben) I would lower 'Use of computer' down to 70 because the keys are so hard to use. 'Graphics' down to about 77 and 'Playability' down 6% to 80. All the other ratings I would take down about 10 to the early seventies or late sixties.

(Rob) As I've said the game is a bit dated now so all the ratings except maybe 'Playability' should go down by 10 to 20%. 'Playability' I would probably push up by a couple of percent to somewhere around the 89 region because it is very playable for a while.

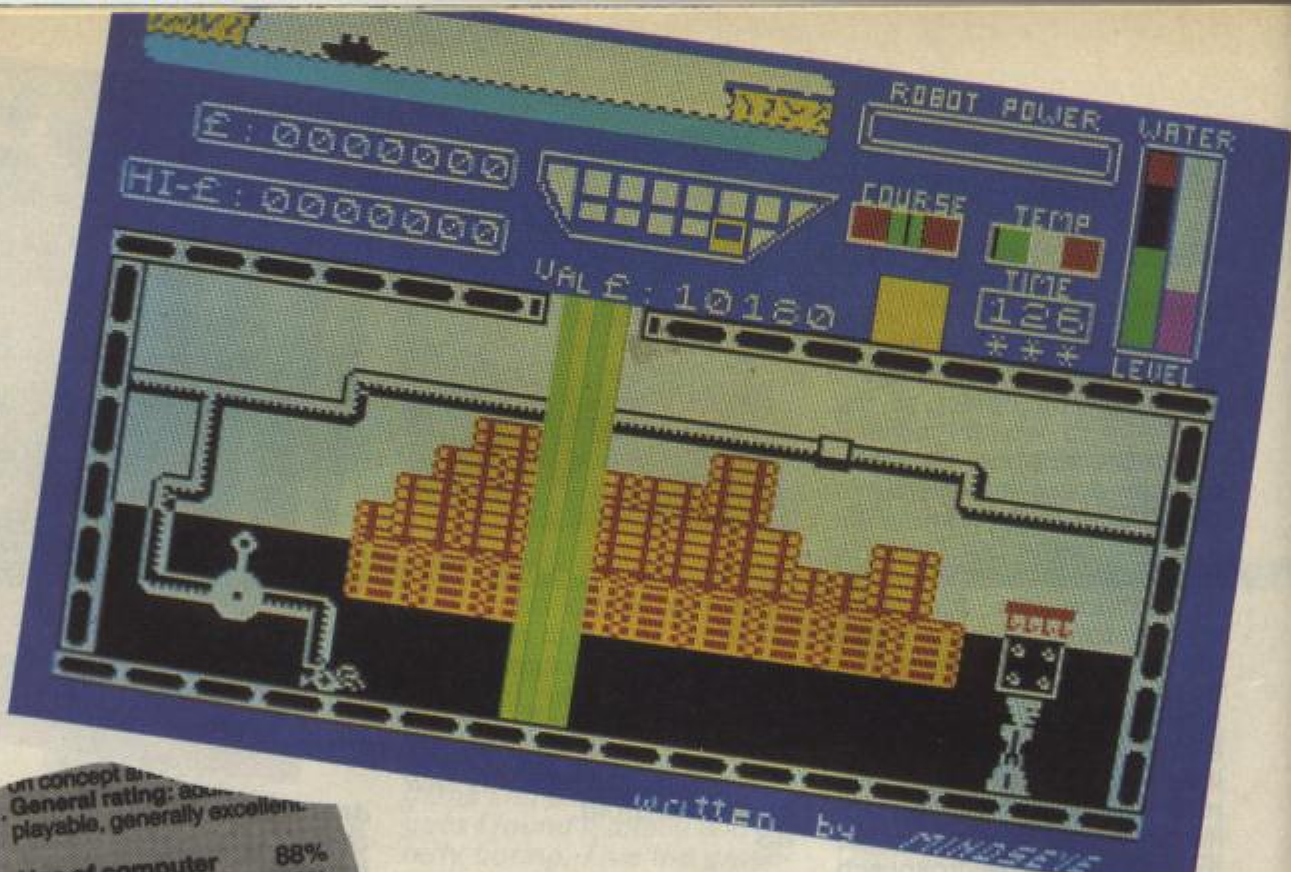


Crashback

Worse Things Happen At Sea

(Silversoft)

WTHAS was Silversoft's first real big hit and since then they haven't looked back. *WTHAS* has been popular in the Hotline and it's still popular with all of the Crash reviewers. The idea of the game couldn't really be simpler, just keep the ship afloat until you arrive at your destination. On the later levels of the game you must regularly oil the engine to stop it from blowing, while still repairing your ship and keeping it on course so you get to your destination quicker. So as you can see it gets quite hectic in there. At the top of the screen is a scanner to indicate your distance from the shore plus scanners for how much robot power you've got left (you have to go back to the start chamber to get it back), how much water there is in the ship plus other details which are important to the running of the ship.



...on concept a...
General rating: ad... playable, generally excellent.

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	89%
Playability	92%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	94%
Originality	95%
Value for money	93%
Overall	91%

● *WTHAS* has stayed in the Hotline charts for a very long time. That must say something about how good the game is and I really enjoyed playing *WTHAS* it's just so addictive and playable. Perhaps after a couple of hours solid playing I might become bored with it but I don't really see that happening to me. The graphics on *WTHAS* are really good and the game still rates a Crash Smash by today's standards which just goes to show that *WTHAS* is a classic game. If you haven't yet got *WTHAS* then get it now, it's too good to be missed.
BS

● WTHAS *is still one of the best games available today. Everything about the game is terrific; it's fun, it's addictive and it's fantastic value for money. When I first saw some pictures of the game I thought it was going to be a bore five hours continuous playing proved me wrong.* WTHAS *is a manic game which is hard to categorise, there isn't anything like it available. When you see programs like this you soon realise why the Spectrum is the best games machine on the market.*
RC

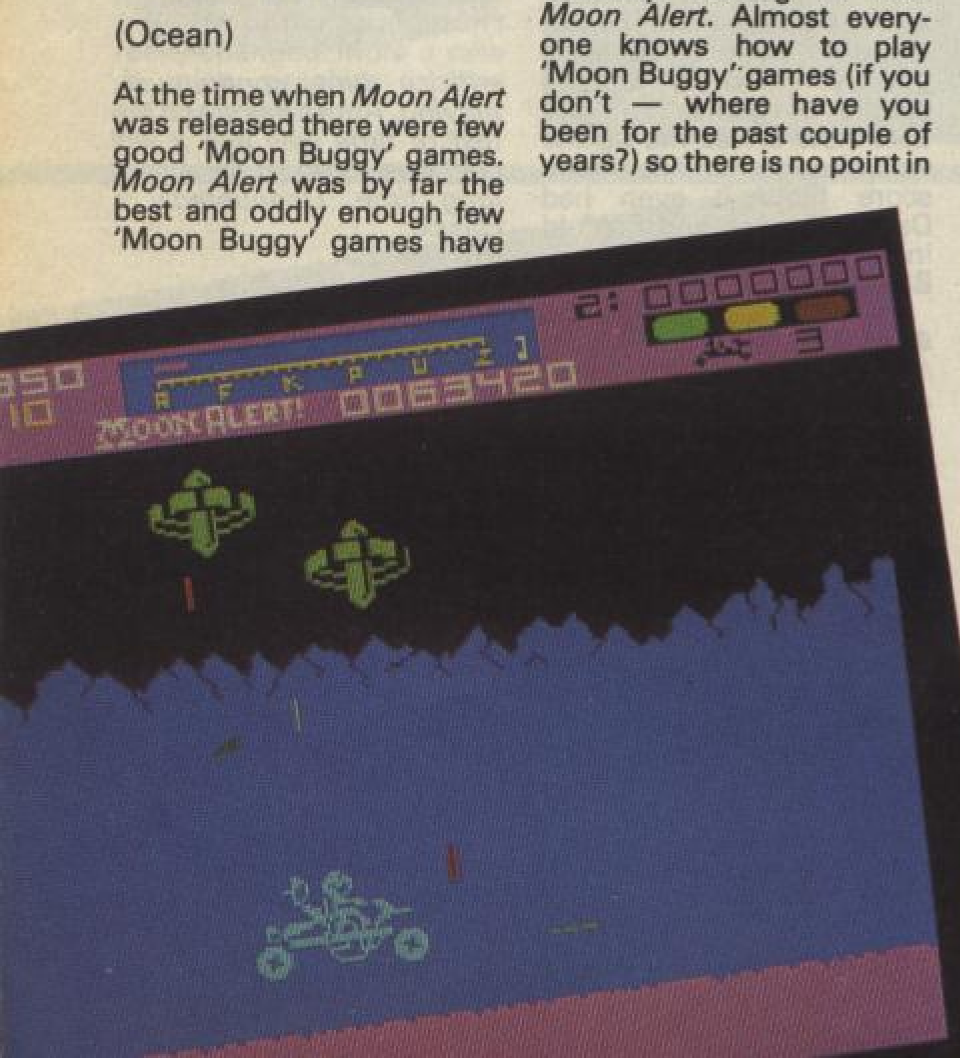
(Ben) I wouldn't quarrel with the ratings at all. It's as good now as it was then.

(Rob) The ratings still stand today and *WTHAS* isn't the least bit dated.

Moon Alert

(Ocean)

At the time when *Moon Alert* was released there were few good 'Moon Buggy' games. *Moon Alert* was by far the best and oddly enough few 'Moon Buggy' games have been released since — certainly nothing to rival *Moon Alert*. Almost everyone knows how to play 'Moon Buggy' games (if you don't — where have you been for the past couple of years?) so there is no point in going over that all over again.



● Several 'Moon Buggy' games were released at about the same time. Ocean's version was undoubtedly the best and it's still a very good game by today's standards. It's just as addictive and playable as it was then and no one has bettered it since.
BS

...ddictive, pla...
...enerally very good.

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	89%
Playability	95%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	94%
Originality	83%
Value for money	90%
Overall	89%

● *I've never been particularly fond of 'Moon Buggy' games but* Moon Alert *caught my attention because it's a really good game. It's a lot more addictive than any other game of its sort. The graphics are fine though your actual buggy is a bit flickery. If you want a 'Moon Buggy' game* Moon Alert *is still the best one available and worth buying.*
RC

(Ben) I wouldn't change any of the ratings. If anything I would put the 'Addictive qualities' up a few points. *Moon Alert* is another game that has stood the test of time well and I highly recommend it

(Rob) The ratings on the whole are basically sound I would only fiddle with them slightly by pushing the 'Use of computer' up by 3 points and maybe lowering the 'Addictive qualities' by a couple of points. Otherwise the review still stands.



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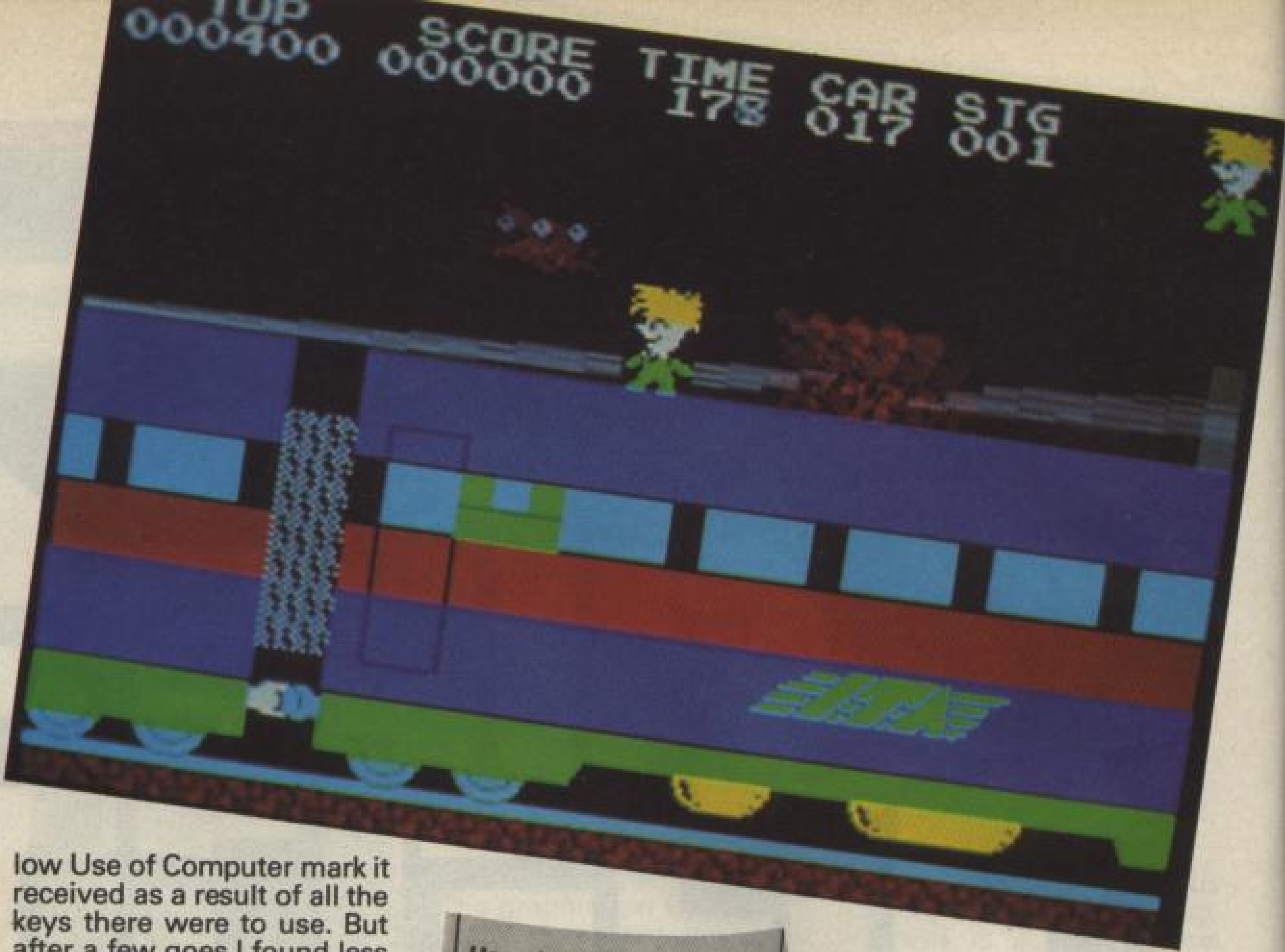
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Crash back



Stop The Express

(Sinclair/Hudson Soft)

Stop The Express is another game that has a very simple idea behind it which has been improved upon by adding good graphics and sound. What you have to do is to get to the front of the train and Stop The Express which has been hijacked by the infamous Redmen. As the review stated the game is played as if it were a scene out of a movie. First of all you must run across the roof of the train dodging obstacles such as knife-throwing Redmen and gaps between carriages. Then after you've got passed a certain number of carriages the scene switches to the inside of the train where you have to get to the front of the train and stop it.

● I think *Stop The Express* is one of the most original games I have ever seen. It surprised me to see that it wasn't a Crash Smash and seeing how popular it has proved in the Hotline I'm even more surprised. Perhaps this was because of the low Use of Computer mark it received as a result of all the keys there were to use. But after a few goes I found less keys than stated could be used and the game played just as well. It's still a good game and has stood the test of time well.
BS

● Stop The Express *was one of the few games that was underrated. By rights I think it should have been a Crash Smash. It's still fun to play and its popularity in the Hotline proves this. The graphics are good and the scrolling of the train and telegraph poles is excellent.*

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	83%
Playability	85%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	85%
Originality	88%
Value for money	83%
Overall	80%

Stop The Express *just goes to show how a simple idea implemented well can make a game as playable now as it was 8 months ago.*
RC

(Ben) I think 'Use of Computer' should go up to about 75 because you can play using only 5 keys but as for the rest of the ratings they should stay as they are.

(Rob) Most of the ratings still stand except for the ludicrous 'Use of Computer' which should be about the 70 mark. Otherwise the game hasn't lost any of it's original appeal.

Sabre Wulf

(Ultimate)

The review of *Sabre Wulf* only just managed to get into issue 6 because we got it so late in the schedule but it was timed just right so we were one of the first magazines to review it. Also due to popular demand a set of ratings will be published in this review as if the game had just come out today. Most people know how to play it, just find the four parts of the amulet and get out only to find you've got to travel on to the *Underwurlde*. The game is played in a 16 by 16 grid with various monsters materialising from the ground. These can be killed by using your trusty sabre while other creatures such as the hippos and warthogs are persuaded to change direction away from you by poking them with your sabre. Only the Wulf which patrols the bottom half of the maze and the guardian that blocks your way out (unless you have the four parts of the amulet of course) aren't affected by your sword, they kill on contact!!

● *Sabre Wulf* it still one of the best games around. It has very good graphics and is still as playable and addictive as anything else on the market at the moment, I don't think it looks at all dated. When *Sabre Wulf* came out everyone said how much like *Atic Atac* it was but just with different graphics, personally I don't really see the resemblance.
BS

● Sabre Wulf, *at the time it was released, caused a bit of controversy because of the new price and some people said it was just* Atic Atac *over again. I agree about the price but comparing it to* Atic Atac *was unfair; if you say* Sabre Wulf *and* Atic Atac *are the same except for graphics, you could argue that all platform games are the same and therefore it doesn't matter which one you buy, but as everybody knows they aren't all alike and equally text adventures aren't the same just because they all have text. As to the game I think it's still pretty good and certainly addictive and playable. Still worth buying, though a little pricey.*
RC

Well here's the moment you've all been waiting for—the ratings.

Use of Computer	90%
Graphics	92%
Playability	91%
Getting started	88%
Addictive Qualities	95%
Value for Money	83%
Overall	**91%**



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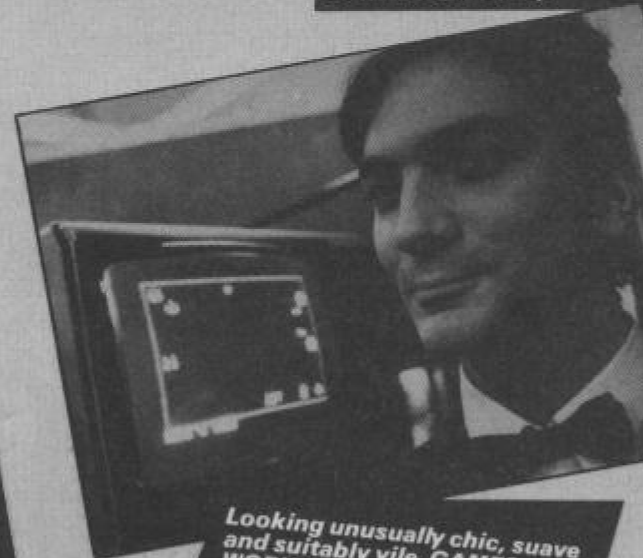
The second ever Leisure Electronics Trade (LET) was held at Olympia 17th to 19th February. There are quite a few personal views from people in this issue, so we won't waste space on words, instead here are a few pictures largely taken while CRASH Editor Roger (he cometh bearing gifts) Kean was handing out the CRASH Readers' Awards to those software houses who were present (everyone except Ultimate in fact).

LET '85
INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOW

Pictures by NICK SACK & Apollo



Mike Cole of ATLANTIS collects the CRASH Readers' Award for the budget game EIGHTS.



Looking unusually chic, suave and suitably vile, GAMES WORKSHOP's Angus Ryall pretends not to be CRASH strategist - the bow tie spits venom when it isn't revolving wildly.





David Ward and John Woods of OCEAN take possession of a CRASH Readers' Award for DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON.



Two stars together, MIKRO-GEN's Wally Week with pop star Mike Berry (he's the one with the voice on the right)! Wally and his gang spent a few hot hours wandering around the show fixing things - whether people wanted them fixed or not.



A young man with something to crow about is Stephen Crow, author of CRASH Smash WIZARDS LAIR, standing here with Anne Lovejoy from BUBBLE BUS.



A group of FANTASYtic people discuss the finer points of playing BACKPACKERS GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE. Paul Dyer on the extreme left and programmer Bob Hamilton on the extreme right (not politically of course).





FANTASY programmer Bob Hamilton, who soon plans to emigrate to the Ludlow area where he has bought a cottage, will be joining other big city emigrés to the Ludlow countryside as Microsphere also plan to move to Shropshire's silicon chip hill.



Two members of the Austin family reprsenting LEVEL 9 COMPUTING get their CRASH Readers' Award for the best text-only adventure, SNOWBALL.



Ian Stewart and a Gremlin go graphics over the CRASH Readers' Award for WANTED: MONTY MOLE.



Clive Bailey, Bill Delaney and the rest of the BEYOND team pose with their two CRASH Reader's Awards, 'State of the Art' and 'Best Graphical Adventure' for LORDS OF MIDNIGHT.



Roy Carter and Greg Follis of GARGOYLE GAMES, the two programmers who were entirely responsible for TIR NA NOG, grin and bear their CRASH Readers' Award for 'Best Shoot Em Up' game AD ASTRA. Greg was particularly pleased because he had just discovered that they had written a follow up to AD ASTRA according to a typographical error in our last Hotline Chart which read ADA ASTRA (a sister program obviously)!

GRAPHICAL SPARKS

Leonardo, the graphics package from **Creative Sparks** first announced November and the basis of a competition we ran in the Christmas issue will be appearing in the shops on 11th March, **Gordon Reid**, Creative Sparks' Product Manager assures us some 18 functions have been added to the package in the interim: 'It just kept on getting bigger throughout the final stages of development,' says Gordon. Anyone wanting to know how they could possibly enter the drawing competition will now be relieved to know that Creative Sparks will be running the whole thing again in conjunction with CRASH — so look out for the details in the May issue.

Meanwhile, the few people who still sent in entries for the Leonardo Competition before the closing date — 28th March — will receive a complimentary copy of *Leonardo* from Creative Sparks for showing willing, and they are welcome to re-enter, but this time they really will have to use *Leonardo* to create their entries

Other readers wondering who won what in the other Christmas Issue competitions should check the results page at the end of the magazine where lists and lists of names appear. Sorry, but we haven't yet been able to make up our minds who will win the Ultimate and Hewson Consultants map drawing competitions, there were so many brill entries. Next ish, promise.

ZX INSURANCE

A broken Spectrum out of warranty can be a major problem, and you can insure against the risk of being lumbered with expensive repair bills once the warranty has expired. Buying insurance can be a bit of a minefield at times, and it's always worth shopping around and examining the small print on policies as well as looking at the price.

Speaking to a lady at the **Domestic and General**

Insurance Co (01-946 7777) it seems that you could insure your Spectrum, or indeed any computer costing less than £150, against breakdown, fire, theft and accidental damage for five years from date of purchase for £31.60. you would have to take out this insurance while your computer was still under warranty, however, or very soon after the guarantee had expired.

The **Micro Repair Club (0990 28102)**, which has its registered office in Wokingham, but currently uses the same address as Domestic and General's head office on its press releases, can offer five years breakdown insurance on a home computer for £57.95 and you can join the scheme at any point in your machine's life, providing it is in good working order.

It's a clear case of reading the small print, taking a choice and paying your money one supposes. . . . Sadly, *Which?* Magazine published by the Consumers Association, hasn't looked into breakdown insurance for home computers, but their more general article on domestic appliance insurance in their May 1984 edition might be a good starting point if you are thinking of insuring your computer.

Any letters on the subject from readers, insurers or Spectrum repairers marked 'Insurance' would be welcomed, and maybe we could pass on some information and experiences. . . .

DRAGON TORC OF AVALON

Report and pictures by JOHN MINSON

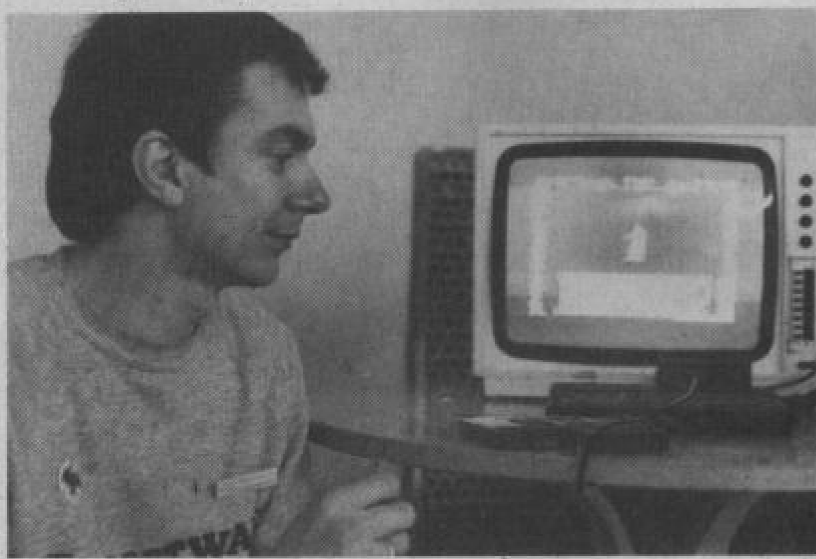
A history lesson. When the Romans left Britain the nation fell into darkness and from the misty chaos of this crucial era came myths....of warlocks, shapeshifters and mighty heroes.

With this background, the Museum of London made an atmospherically fitting setting for **Hewson Consultants** to launch *Dragontorc of Avalon*, sequel to the CRASH Smash, *Avalon*. High technology met artifacts from several thousand years of history, including some replica torcs.

this time in battle against Morag the Shapeshifter, Witch Queen of the North, who threatens Britain with a reign of horror using the all-powerful Dragontorc.

Hewson called the first game an 'Adventure Movie'. For *Dragontorc*, they've coined the phrase 'Sensory Animation' to refer to the fact that interaction between Maroc and other characters depends on previous events, race etc. For example, elves are naturally timid — but win their confidence, and you can gather a small army.

This sophistication brings *Dragontorc* even closer to traditonal role playing games, so it comes as no surprise to find that Steve is a Dungeons and Dragons fan and that Maroc began life as a D & D character.



Author Steve Turner shows the press how to guide Maroc through ancient Britain on a quest against the Shapeshifter

Torcs? They're the twisted golden jewellery that the Celts wore before charging into bloody battle — 'wearing your wealth round your neck', is how Dragontorc author **Steve Turner** describes it.

A lot of preliminary research went into the game, which Steve says is an extension of the reality of the time. As in *Avalon* you command Maroc the mage,

Unlike many text adventures the problems here have multiple solutions but that's more like life, according to Steve, and it means that if you're not quick enough with the arcade elements you can find some other way.

March 28th is the day on which the mists of time roll back and once again Britain will fall into the Dark Ages.

LEGEND HIT BACK

After the disappointment of **Legend**'s *The Great Space Race*, you might expect Legend to have developed a bit of a complex, especially about hype/ **John Peel**, Legend's svenghali, is unworried about such things — except that he wants no one to think that Legend only sells games through hype. But it turns out that they *have* developed a complex. It's a new game called *Komplex* and it should be on sale by the time this edition of CRASH hits the streets.

To konfound the kritics *Komplex* isn't being hyped at all (yet, anyway), in fact John Peel refused to say very much about the game beyond telling me that it is Legend's first ever arcade game, and that it will be followed within a very few weeks by what he calls *Komplex — The Editor*. The Editor tape will contain all the usual gamut of cheats normally gathered painfully by hackers all over the country, infinite lives, no monsters, relocation of objects etc, etc. Maybe Legend haven't lost their bottle after all — at CRASH we've been telling software houses for months that the 'cheat' aspect of games has become almost as important to many people as the actual content, always given that the game is good enough to grab the attention in the first place.

Anyway, there it is — *Valhalla, The Great Space Race* and now *Komplex*. Could John just squeeze out one more word on it before giving up non-hype for Lent? 'It is a fast action arcade game, but there is a long term mission/quest element where you, the player, are the hero. I'm not making any claims for the graphics until people have had a chance to judge for themselves.'

He was persuaded to pass on one comment from someone who had a chance to see the game, and that was that they really liked it because it isn't a clone of anything — it's original. At which point John Peel, fearing a bout of uncontrollable hype coming on, signed off. *Komplex* is for the 48K Spectrum, priced £9.95, and we'll be reviewing it next month.

SOFT AID made its debut appearance at the LET show, at the price of £4.99 rather than £2.99 as was expected when we wrote about the project in March. Still a good deal, nevertheless.

And the furry fellows at Gremlin Graphics are also doing their bit for the Computer trade Weekly/ Soft Aid Ethiopian Appeal with a specially commissioned children's adventure, Tinderbox. All profits will be donated to the Ethiopian Appeal.

GOING CHEAP

'Budget software sells' is the less than amazing conclusion that software companies are coming to. **Gilsoft**'s *Gold Collection* of eight adventures is now on the market at £1.99, including *Magic Castle, Mindbender* and *Devil's Island*.

Beau Jolly is spending a quarter of a million pounds on TV ads for the launch of *Megahits*, which contains ten games on two cassettes for £19.95 — and given that six out of the ten were CRASH Smashes in their day, the package is hardly a rip-off

Atlantis are continuing their range of budget tapes, with *Nicotine Nightmare* (reviewed this issue) and *Self Destruct* founding their new Atlantis Gold label, which will retail at £2.99. The main Atlantis label will, of course continue to provide titles at £1.99

And **Artic**'s slashed the price of most of its Spectrum games to £1.99, with the exception of *World Cup*, and this includes the Artic adventures A — G.

OUT WITH THE SHOPPING BAG

Jokes about **Argus Press Software**'s shopping list for other companies abounded at the LET Show - they'd already bought **Quicksilva** by that stage.

At LET they stitched up a deal with **Lothlorien** which they now describe, quite naturally, as 'Britain's leading computer wargame company'. APS will now be handling the production and marketing of future Lothlorien titles. And Quicksilva themselves have tied up a similar deal with **Bug-Byte** through which they've gained the exclusive rights to seven titles developed by Bug-Byte — for a sum which the modest fellows at Quicksilva feel unable to disclose for some reason.

And **Rod Cousens**, Quicksilva's MD goes on record as saying that Quicksilva intends to see considerable expansion in the field of publishing third party software this year.

Perhaps someone should start some budget software houses too?

CHUCK AN EGG TWO

Exciting news from **A 'n F** who are about to hatch *Chuckie Egg II*. They've asked CRASH to be official scrutineers of the **Grand Chuckie Egg II National High Score Competition.**

There will be six regional heats, one each held in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, North England, the Midlands and the South of England, and they will be held during August.

Entrants need to use the save routine in the program to record their high score and send it off with the tear-off part of the inlay card to enter their appropriate regional play off, which will be fought out between the top 20 scorers from each region.

Regional winners pick up £100 and a Silver Egg trophy, while runners up gain £50 and a Silver Egglet. The dozen regional finalists go forward to the National Final to be held in London, where the top prize will be £500 and the Golden Chuckie Egg; the runner up will take home the Golden Egglet and £250, while the person in third place will walk off £150 richer.

Full details of the competiton are to be found on the *Chuckie Egg II* cassette inlay. We couldn't see the game in time to review it for this issue, but we're promised that Chuckie Egg fans won't be disappointed by the new 120 screen arcade adventure starring Henhouse Harry and the haywire chocolate egg factory. Full review, next issue.

BLOODAXED!

Tim Langdell of **The Edge** has been in touch to say that some naughty dealers have been flogging off the sample copies of *Brian Bloodaxe* to unsuspecting punters. 'Is there no end to the human potential for greed?' I hear you cry.

Trouble is, these sample copies — clearly marked as such, and mailed nationwide to dealers — had been specially doctored to make sure no-one could get a head start in the competition contained in the game. So a few people have already been in touch with The Edge in the belief that they've finished the game and are in line for the prize — only to find that they've been flogged one of the doctored copies and haven't completed the game.

If you've got a copy of *Brian Bloodaxe* that is, or looks like it was marked 'Sample', the best thing to do is take it back to the shop you bought it from and ask for a proper copy.


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PLAYING TIPS

from ROBIN CANDY



Not guilty! Not guilty! It wasn't my fault that the pokes published last month for *Underwurlde* and *Knight Lore* came out wrong — the Underwurlde one was misprinted and the Knightlore one only works with Interface 1. I've paid the consequences many times over (you know you start to hate phone calls when they all ask you the same questions — why don't your pokes work?) So there are proper versions of both routines published in this issue which have been tested. If you can't get them to work you're either doing something wrong or they might have been misprinted (which isn't my fault!) Well (I think I've only used that word once this month) less of the intro (they're really boring to write and read anyway) and on with the tips.

147 BREAK

This tip sent in by **Robert Tonks** of Hollywood (not the one you think) and it enables you to get a 147 break on *Steve Davis Snooker*.

Select a one player game then pot a red and then a colour (preferably the pink or black). Then press Caps and R together and you can take the shot again. Keep on doing this until you reach about 147 then pot another red to finish the break.

EVERYONE'S A WALLY

I haven't had many tips in for this yet but it's still early days. So here are a couple of my own.

To mend the fountain get the Monkey Nuts from the Bakers using Wilma. You can now enter the Zoo, take the Monkey wrench from the Zoo and drop it somewhere convenient. Now find Dick the plumber and go find the Plunger. Get the Monkey wrench and take Dick to the fountain (making sure that he has got both the Wrench and the Plunger). Jump up on the fountain and jump at the statue on top, this should mend it. Once the fountain has been mended then get Wally, the empty bucket and the sand. Take Wally to the fountain and the bucket should fill up. Once this is done take Wally to the cement mixer and pick up the cement, find the Trowel. With the Trowel and cement go to the location with the bricks in it, walk passed them and the wall should be built. Does anyone know how to mend the gas pipe and the hook?

ANDROID

These pokes are for infinite lives the person who sent them in forgot to include their name and address, sorry whoever you are!

When the game has loaded and asks for Keyboard or Joystick options note down what they are then press CAPS and BREAK. Now enter these three pokes as direct commands:

POKE 52249,24: POKE 52250,32: POKE 53897,0

Now enter CONTINUE plus ENTER. Make your selection for keyboard or Joystick options (you won't be able to see these, that's why you noted then down). You should now have infinite lives on this game.

STARSTRIKE

After my appeal for more tips for *Starstrike* a 'Star Wars' fanatic, **Mr R Cope** of Exeter was prompted to send in his findings on this excellent game. . . .

Space:

In space on levels one and two only one ship fires at you at a time. Look at the screens very carefully, most of the ships fly in a circular path. The best way of killing a ship is to follow the same path, blasting the plasma bolts and following through by finally blasting the alien ship. The instant you destroy a ship another fires at you, so keep on the move. On the higher levels more ships fire more often and some situations are impossible to beat. If you momentarily clear the screen centre your gun marker because over a third of the ships appear from the centre. At the end of this screen one or two ships spiral out and go behind you, move your cursor to the far left or right and pick them off as they make their final pass.

The Surface

Here things get tough!! On level one it is best to use the tip from last month's playing tips. It also works if you move hard left or hard right, this shows the incredible graphics at their best. Pick off the laser bunkers by diving on them and spraying an arc of fire, but don't hold the fire button down too long! When you've got the towers things are a bit different. If you clear all the tower tops you get 50000 points bonus plus what ever you get for hitting the tower tops. So it's worth using up some shields to get some extra points. After you have shot all the tower tops turn your attentions back to the bunkers.

The Trench

This is where the main problems occur. Usually the cursor self centres side to side, but up and down it normally lies in one of three positions, top, middle or bottom. So it is possible to maintain your height and just concentrate on your side to side movements. In the later trenches it gets tough and a joystick is essential. Take a couple of games to learn how to get through certain catwalk formations. Don't move too violently, despite the collision detection routines it does take too much movement to get through the side to side catwalks.

The End

First of all when the tactical appears let go of the joystick so your cursor self centres. Then just move left to right to blow up the cubes and see one of the best graphical sequences ever.

BACK-PACKERS

These tips were slipped to us by a spy in Fantasy Software and are to be used in conjunction with the map in this issue.

Use of TNT

TNT is used to gain access to keys that are diagonally below the brick work when reaching a dead end. Different colours of TNT have different values, the colour to use depends upon the thickness of the rock. To use TNT you must drop it into the cavity and walk completely off the brick work. The screen will then flash blue, you can then return to see if the value of the TNT was correct.

Use of Keys

Keys are used to open doors, the correct colour to use depends on the colour of the ground work in which the door lies. The colours are as follows:

Blue- there are two blue keys one is a red herring
Green- five keys
Yellow- five keys
Magenta- two keys (one is the exit/entry key)

In some cases you must have the correct yellow key to open a yellow door. The keys do look different.

Use of Disks

Disks are used to put into the direction indicator so that one of the arrows lights up. This arrow points to the general direction of the exit/entry key.

Use of Crystals

These are used to transport Ziggy from one area of the maze to another. The colours are as follows:
Magenta 1
Yellow 1
Blue 1
Green 1

The Backpack status displays the current conditions of any creatures in the Backpack. The status changes from normal through to critical when Ziggy has suffered many hits from aliens in the caverns

MONTY'S INNOCENT

The amount of people that have rung up to ask if they were the first to complete *Monty is Innocent* has been tremendous and it wasn't much longer before the tips came flooding in either. So here are some of the tips we received for *Monty is Innocent* from **Paul Blackburn** of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Always have a gun, and if possible a potion before opening a door. This is because when you find Monty many more monsters will appear.

After finding Monty leave the room where the cells are, then go down the tunnel. Keep going left until you come to the ladder which goes up onto the grass, go up this and you have rescued Monty.

Using these methods I have rescued Monty in 2 minutes and 44 seconds.

GIFT FROM THE GODS

To kill the creatures move close to them and hack at them using the scything action. After a while you will hear a beep then thrust at the monster and it will disappear. When it disappears all of the illusions in the maze will disappear and only the true Euclidean shapes will be in the chambers. This only lasts for a short while.

When you enter the Guardian's chamber just drop an Euclidean shape and if it is not an illusion it will appear on a tree. The moment you enter the Guardian's chamber your stamina is restored to 100. You can also replenish your energy by standing directly underneath the drips that fall from the roof in certain rooms.

These tips are brought to you courtesy of **Martin John** and **Simon Randall** of Hampstead.

BOOTY

Booty is excellent value for money as everybody knows but did you know there are really two games in one. Well this what you have to do.

Insert your Currah Microspeech before loading then load *Booty* as normal. When it has loaded insert the sound amplifier wire into the EAR socket. Wait for the game to go into demo mode then press any key. You will now become a diver swimming underneath the boats and the idea of the game is to collect as many fish as you can. When your air goes down then swim to the surface to get some more.

When this tip first came in I thought it might be another *Lunar Jetman* trailer but I've checked it out and it works. It was supplied by **Toby Marlow** of Desborough.

BRIAN BLOODAXE

Brian Bloodaxe is a bit harder than the average platform game and things can be done that you wouldn't think could be done. So **Wally Week** (yet another imposter?) of Liverpool has sent in a letter detailing just a few of the oddities of this intriguing game from The Edge.

It is possible to get rid of meanies by jumping at them from underneath so they are spiked on your helmet. Take care doing this for if you miss you could lose a lot of energy.

To replenish energy pick up and drop repeatedly the glasses of lager found to the right of the pool table.

If you have three objects you can make stair cases to get to higher doors by dropping one object, standing on top of it moving slightly then dropping another and so on. This is particularly useful in the room with the aeroplane.

ALIEN 8

Alien 8 has caused a stir with its graphics looking like *Knight Lore*'s but there still hasn't been a lack of people prepared to give tips on it. The day after the game was released CRASH was inundated with callers offering maps for the game. There's a T-shirt for the first person to send in cheat routines (pokes etc.). Any takers?

These tips come from **Adrian Coldough** of Stafford.

In certain rooms you will find a flashing object and some little men. There are 24 of these rooms and 132 of these men called Cryonaughts. To activate a room you must find the object that is the same as the one that is flashing (like the cauldron in *Knight Lore*) you then drop the object on top of the flashing one and you have activated the room, you can tell if you are successful because the room goes white. You have to do this 24 times to complete the game.

And now the moment you've all been waiting for, the first set of poke codes for *Alien 8* as sent in by K.R. Walker of Birmingham. First type in this header:

```
10 FOR N = 30000 TO 30028
20 READ A: POKE N,A: NEXT N
30 PRINT "START RECORDING
AND PRESS ANY KEY"
40 IF INKEY$ = "" THEN GOTO
40
50 RANDOMIZE USR 30000
60 DATA 221, 33, 60, 117, 17, 17,
0, 175, 205, 194, 4, 201
70 DATA 0, 65, 76, 73, 69, 78, 32,
32, 32, 32, 32, 141, 5, 0, 128, 36, 4
```

RUN this and it should save to tape as a false header. Now play your *Alien 8* tape to just past the header signal. Load your false header then play the *Alien 8* tape. When the OK message appears enter the following five pokes:

```
POKE 24776, 120
POKE 24777, 74
POKE 24778, 108
POKE 24779, 82
POKE 24780, 140
```

Interface 1 owners should add 58 to the poke addresses eg POKE 24776 + 58, 120 etc. Once all this has been done enter GOTO 0 restart the tape and the game should load as normal except for Infinite lives. I've checked all this out and it works perfectly, so thank you Mr K. R. Walker for such a splendid poke.

BACKPACKER'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE - THE MAP

DRAWN B
OLIVER FRE



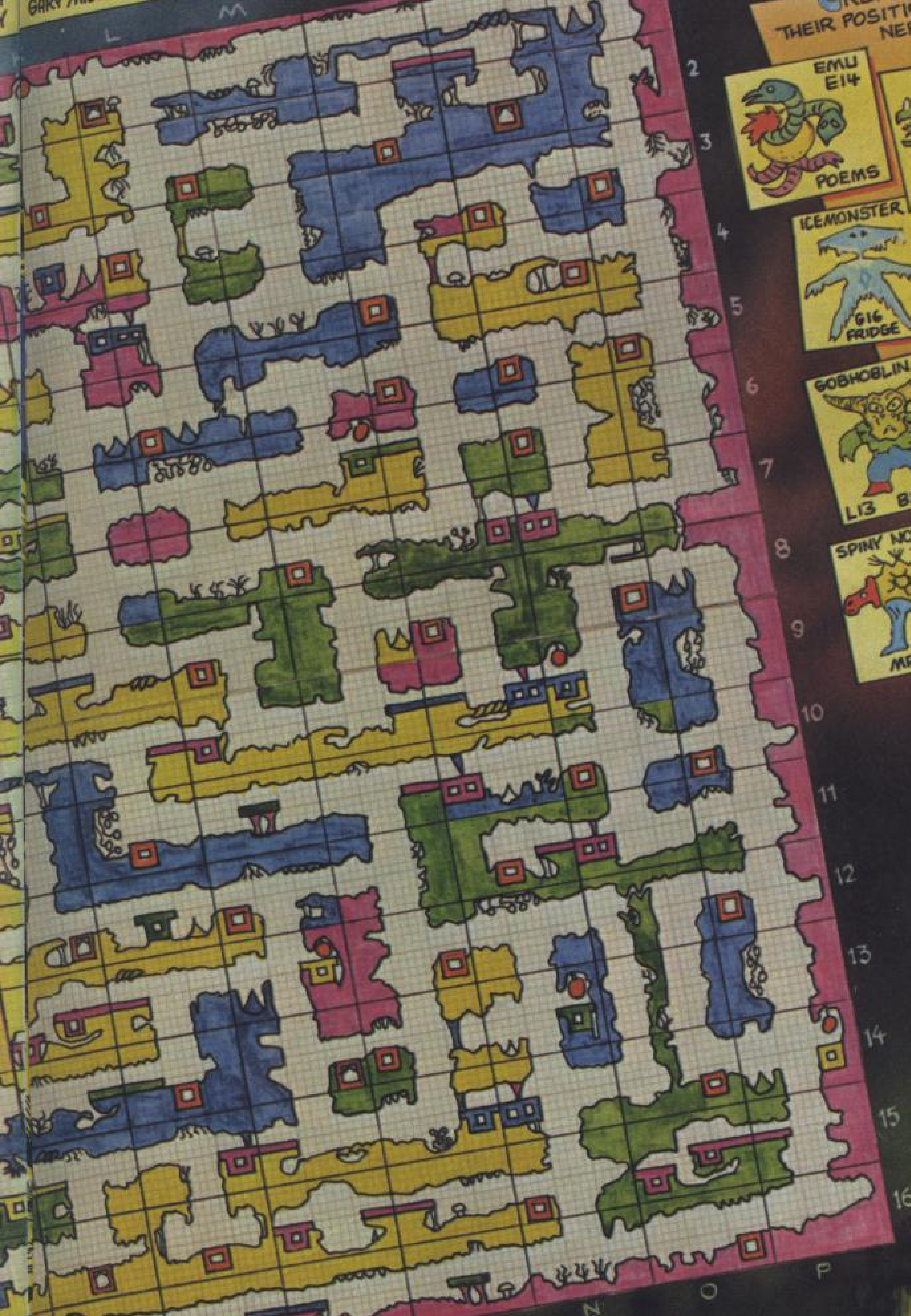
KEYS - WHERE THEY ARE AND HOW TO GET THEM

	KEY	POSITION	TNT
USING TNT		D10	
		G11	
		J6	
		J12	
		A1	
		O15	
		C11	

	KEY	POSITION	KEYS TO USE
USING OTHER KEYS		E15	
		I5	FOUR
		K4	-EXIT
		N7	
		C12	OR
		M14	

TIP: IF YOU GO RIGHT – THEN LEFT AT THE START OF THE GAME AN OBJECT IS SOMETIMES REVEALED. IF SO THE EXIT KEY IS IN THE OBJECT'S PLACE.

COMPILED BY GARY MILLER, DOVER



CREATURES THEIR POSITIONS + FOOD/ITEMS NEEDED



FOOD AND ITEMS

POEMS	B13 C4 K15 N5
GRASS	A9 D16 D2 E10 F11 G4 H10 K2 K13 L11 M7 N2 P12
BLOOD	B3 E7 G2 I11 L5 M13 O3 O6
FRIDGE	H2
HANDKERCHIEF	M12
TEABAGS	A11 D3 N15
BERRIES	G14 F9
HYDROGEN	K16 O10
FISH	B5 I7 N4 O8
CHEESE	C4 E4 I13 L3 N8 O5 P3 P10
MAGGOTS	A8 D4 H12 J2 J11 L2 O4 O14 O16 P5 D1 C13
PILLS	B11 C1 D7 D14 G13 L8

OTHER OBJECTS – WHERE TO FIND THEM

TNT COLOUR POSITION: M6 C3 N13 F8 G8 K1 L15

DROP IN BRICK CELL WITH TWO HANDS

CRYSTAL: K3 H13 K11 L9

TRANSPORTS TO: F16 I14 E8 F3

DISCS: A16 I12 E2 J8

TALISMAN I4 + N11

USE ALL FOUR IN I3 TO TRANSPORT ACROSS – BUT CARRY KEY TO GET OUT

MORE KEYS TO MORE DOORS

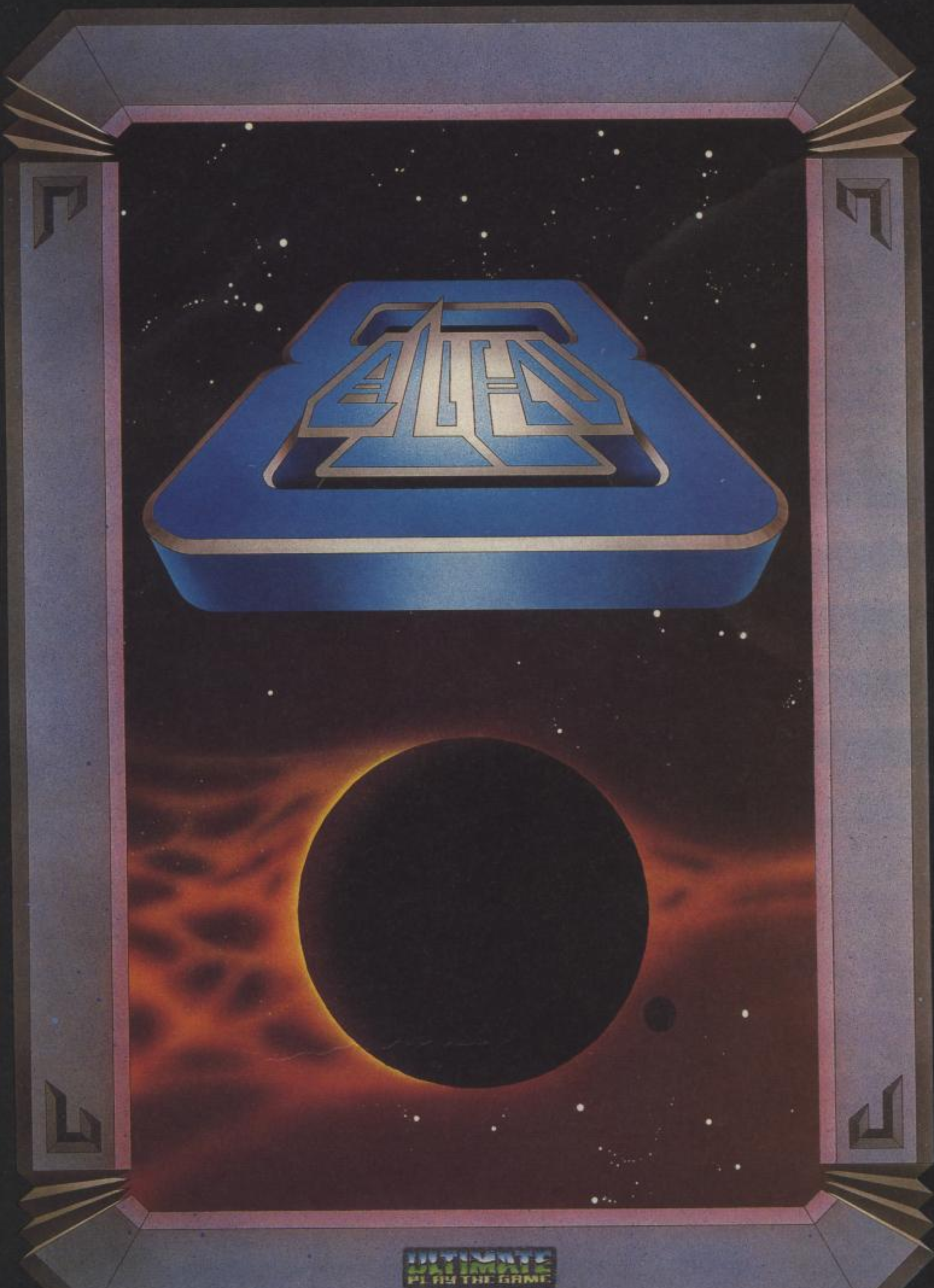
POSITION	USE KEY
B14	
C6	
E11	
E13	
H8	
N9	
N10	

SOME KEYS OPEN MORE THAN ONE LOCK – SO IF YOU HAVE NOT GOT THE KEY INDICATED TRY THE ONES YOU DO HAVE...




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Available from W.H.SMITHS, BOOTS, J.MENZIES, WOOLWORTHS
and all good software retail outlets. Also available from
ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME, The Green, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5JU
(P&P included) Tel: 0530 411485

HOTLINE TOP 30 FOR APRIL

Figures in parenthesis indicate last month's position

1 *(–1)* **KNIGHT LORE** Ultimate
2 *(–9)* **MATCH DAY** Ocean
3 *(–2)* **UNDERWURLDE** Ultimate
4 *(11)* **SKOOL DAZE** Microsphere
5 *(–3)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
6 *(–6)* **DTs DECATHLON** Ocean
7 *(–8)* **STARSTRIKE** realtime
8 *(–4)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
9 *(21)* **AIRWOLF** Elite
10 *(–5)* **SABREWULF** Ultimate

11 *(14)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
12 *(10)* **PYJAMARAMA** Mikro-Gen
13 *(12)* **MATCH POINT** Psion/Sinclair
14 *(–7)* **MONTY MOLE** Gremlin Graphics
15 *(—)* **TECHNICIAN TED** Hewson Consultants
16 *(18)* **GHOSTBUSTERS** Activision
17 *(24)* **BOULDERDASH** Front Runner
18 *(17)* **ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
19 *(26)* **DARKSTAR** Design Design
20 *(13)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games

21 *(22)* **CYCLONE** Vortex
22 *(15)* **BOOTY** Firebird
23 *(49)* **KOKOTONI WILF** Elite
24 *(19)* **MANIC MINER** Software projects
25 *(16)* **JET SET WILLY** Software Projects
26 *(28)* **AMERICAN FOOTBALL** Argus Press Software
27 *(30)* **BEACH-HEAD** US Gold
28 *(—)* **GIFT FROM THE GODS** Ocean
29 *(—)* **ALIEN 8** Ultimate
30 *(—)* **KUNG FU** Bug-Byte

Knight Lore still remains undisputed leader, but **Ocean**'s *Match Day* has climbed rapidly to push *Underwurlde* off the number 2 slot. Another big climber is **Microsphere** with their anarchic *Skool Daze* — up 7 places to this month's number 4 and pushing *Doomdark* down one. *Airwolf* from **Elite** goes up 12 places, but the biggest climber of all is *Technician Ted* from **Hewson** — straight in for the first time at 15. Lower down the chart there are three newcomers, *Gift from the Gods* — a gift from **Ocean**, *Alien 8*, despite moans from many has taken off well, and finally the martial arts of **Bug-Byte** with *Kung Fu*.



The winner for this month's Hotline Chart draw is **Miss JL Wheeler**, Wendover, Bucks. The four runners-up are; **Jack Lockerby**, Aylesham, Kent; **Michael Shotton**, Wombourne, Wolverhampton; **Jerry Elsmore**, Croydon, Surrey; **Kevin Bartlett**, Bristol, Avon.

BRILL 'N' FAB HOTLINE PRIZES!!

The CRASH HOTLINE & ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart. It depends entirely on your support and we need your votes. There are two methods for voting, either use the CRASH HOTLINE PHONE-IN, or cut out the special coupons which you can find on page 122.
Whether you phone or write in, all the names go into the Hotline Bag to be drawn monthly. First out in both charts receives £40 WORTH OF SOFTWARE plus a CRASH T-SHIRT. The four runners-up in both charts each receive a CRASH T-SHIRT and THREE free issues of CRASH Magazine (a kind of mini-subscription — existing subscriptions will be appropriately extended).



ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



Doomdark still rules okay in adventure, and his popularity, amazingly, seems to have awakened *The Lords of Midnight* which has popped up at number 28. Arcade and graphical adventures hold sway throughout with *Tir Na Nog* up at number 2, *Runes of Zendos, Out of the Shadows* and *Avalon* all doing well. Nice to see oddball adventure *Valkyrie 17* from the **Ram Jam Corporation** climbing again, up 10 places to this month's 19 slot; and *Spiderman*, companion to the *Hulk* (this month's number 10), arrives from nowhere at 22. But in most respects there is little real change, just a few short shuffles.

Figures in parenthesis indicate last month's position

1	*(–1)*	**DOOMDARK'S REVENGE**	Beyond
2	*(–4)*	**TIR NA NOG**	Gargoyle Games
3	*(–6)*	**RUNES OF ZENDOS**	Dorcas
4	*(–2)*	**OUT OF THE SHADOWS**	Myzar
5	*(–5)*	**RETURN TO EDEN**	Level 9
6	*(–7)*	**SHERLOCK**	Melbourne House
7	*(–8)*	**KENTILLA**	Micromega
8	*(–9)*	**TOWER OF DESPAIR**	Games Workshop
9	*(–9)*	**TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY**	Bug-Byte
10	*(15)*	**THE HULK**	Adventure International
11	*(13)*	**SNOWBALL**	Level 9
12	*(17)*	**THE FINAL MISSION**	Incentive
13	*(22)*	**AVALON**	Hewson Consultants
14	*(23)*	**FLIGHT FROM THE DARK**	Arrow Books
15	*(25)*	**EUREKA!**	Domark
16	*(11)*	**HAMPSTEAD**	Melbourne House
17	*(12)*	**THE HOBBIT**	Melbourne House
18	*(16)*	**WAYDOR**	I.M.S.
19	*(29)*	*VALKYRIE 17*	Ram Jam Corporation
20	*(18)*	**URBAN UPSTART**	Richard Shepherd
21	*(14)*	**QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL**	Dream
22	*(—)*	**SPIDERMAN**	Adventure International
23	*(24)*	**COLOSSAL ADVENTURE**	Level 9
24	*(21)*	**MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDA**	Interceptor
25	*(19)*	**ORACLE'S CAVE**	Dorcas
26	*(27)*	**SHIP OF DOOM**	Artic
27	*(26)*	**VELNOR'S LAIR**	Quicksilva
28	*(—)*	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	Beyond
29	*(30)*	**MOUNTAINS OF KET**	Incentive
30	*(28)*	**GOLDEN APPLE**	Artic

The winner for this month's Adventure Chart draw is **George Dick**, Edinburgh. The four runners-up are; **C Powell**, Hemel Hempstead, Herts; **Bill Ip**, Redditch, Worcs; **Steven Wadsworth**, Kings Lynn, Norfolk; **Daniel Gritz**, Blackpool, Lancs.

THE CRASH HOTLINE IS 0584 (LUDLOW) 3015



PLAYING TIPS

MUTANT MONTY

This poke sent in by **Martin Betts** (who's got a personality problem — he thinks he's a retired colonel but he's 16) of Eastbourne gives 256 lives on *Mutant Monty* by Artic.

POKE 54933,0

Please ensure that you print your full name and address at the top of the letter. Lots of people expect me to be able to decipher an elegant-looking but totally unreadable signature, and I am not a graphologist or whatever they're called!

DRAGON TORC

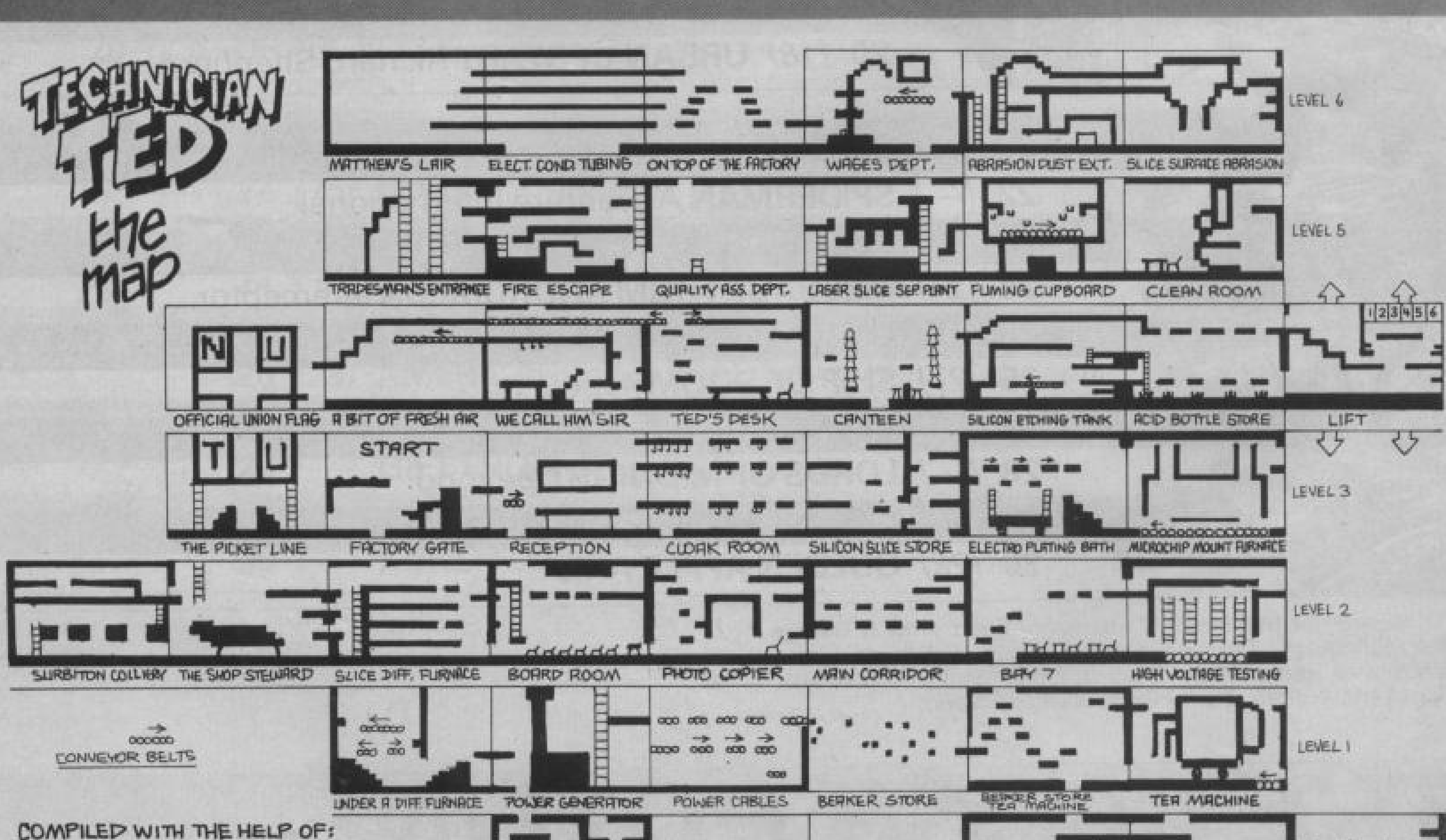
These are a couple of advance tips for *The Dragon Torc Of Avalon* given to me by **Andrew Hewson** to get people started in this game. Sadly *Dragon Torc* arrived too late for review but from what I've seen it looks every bit as good as *Avalon* if not better.

You must befriend the Elves if you want to have a hope of completing the game. On the first level find a Bow and Arrow and using the Servant spell give it to one of the elves, you should receive a Sickle (or Scythe if you prefer) in return. With the sickle cut down the herb in one of the locations, this should give you an Energise spell. Under a slab in the first level there should be a jewel, trade this with an elf to get a message which gives a clue to what you have to do later on in the game. Also on the first level there is a missile spell in the pool this is useful in the lost vaults. Take the message to the other stone slab on the first level using the servant spell and this should open up a passageway down to the next level, the Lost Vaults. To get out of the Lost Vaults you must collect the letters **X, I** and **T** place these on top of the letter **E** so as to spell **EXIT** and that takes you to another level.

These tips should get you all started on *Dragon Torc* and here's a challenge to all people who can beat *Avalon* — try and finish it by going through as few rooms as possible. Let me know how well you do.

The Lloyd Mangram Hand Me Down typewriter (or is that writetyper?) has breathed its last and refuses to work for another month (just as well 'cause my fingers are worn out and I've got a headache from looking at that darn monitor all day plus there is homework still to do) and I must say goodbye until next month (partings are such sad affairs). Keep sending your tips in and maybe you will get a Crash T-Shirt. Write in to the usual address (which should be somewhere around here but I'm not sure where the Art department are going to stick it this time).

ROBIN CANDY, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.



Cock Up Corner

This is a new addition to the Playing Tips section in which I try and rectify some of last month's cock ups. I will *try* not to make this a regular feature! First the *Underwurlde* pokes — instead of bothering with last month's pokes enter this instead. It was sent in by **Chris Sunderland** of Inverness and it gives infinite lives.

```
10 LET S=0: RESTORE: FOR
Z=1 TO 65: READ N: LET
S=S+N: NEXT Z: IF
S<>9205 THEN PRINT
"ERROR": STOP
20 CLEAR 64500: RESTORE
30 FOR Z=64507 TO 64554
40 READ N: POKE Z,N: NEXT
Z
50 FOR Z=23296 TO 23312
60 READ N: POKE Z,N: NEXT
Z
65 POKE 59375,0
70 RANDOMIZE USR 64532
80 PRINT "START
UNDERWURLDE TAPE"
90 LOAD ""
100 DATA 243, 245, 58, 173,
96, 254, 243, 32, 11, 62, 91,
50, 173, 96, 175, 50, 176, 96,
237, 86, 241, 255, 251, 237,
77, 243, 62, 251, 1, 1, 1, 33, 0,
253, 229, 209, 19, 119, 237,
176, 62, 253, 237, 71, 237, 94,
251, 201
110 DATA 33, 9, 91, 34, 214,
243, 195, 166, 243, 62, 116,
50, 117, 144, 195, 242, 103
```

Now for the infinite lives and infinite days on *Knightlore* correction sent in by **Mr Jonathon Hatcher** of Bournemouth, a T-Shirt is on its way you. You don't need the now infamous INTERFACE ONE attached to the Spectrum to make it work, just do exactly as is written below and it will work (It's been fully tested by several members of staff — well me several times anyway). First enter this program then NEW it.

```
5 CLEAR 64999
10 FOR F=65000 TO 65040:
READ A: POKE F,A: NEXT F
100 DATA 1,172, 1, 17, 48,
242, 42, 83, 92, 174, 18, 126,
35, 19, 11, 253, 111, 120, 177,
253, 125, 32, 242, 62, 251, 50,
217, 243, 62, 207, 50, 218,
243, 62, 61, 50, 48, 242, 195,
166, 243
```

Then enter the next program, save it when it prompts you to. Then NEW it.

```
10 FOR F=40000 TO 40028:
READ A: POKE F,A: NEXT F
20 PRINT#1 "START TAPE
THEN PRESS ANY KEY":
PAUSE 0: RANDOMIZE USR
40000
100 DATA 221, 33, 76, 156,
17, 17, 0, 175, 205, 194, 4,
201, 0, 67, 82, 65, 67, 75, 69,
68, 73, 84, 33, 13, 4, 0, 128,
217, 3
```

Now play your *Knightlore* tape to just past the header signal. Now load the false header you have just saved to tape and put your *Knightlore* tape back into the recorder and play it. When the **OK** message appears stop the tape and enter this poke:-
POKE 23756,1 and delete line one. Repeat this procedure until there appears to be no line numbers or BASIC left. Now enter **RANDOMIZE USR 65000** and start the *Knightlore* tape again. When it has loaded ignore the garbage message and enter these pokes:-

POKE 53567,0 for infinite lives
POKE 50206,0 for infinite days
Then type in **RANDOMIZE USR 24832** and play the game.

CAN YO[U BEAT] MICROMEGA'S SLI[ME]

Crash Competition

If you are up to the challenge then there's some fun and g

MICROMEGA, who have just released A DAY IN THE LIFE are currently constructing a special SLIME CHAMBER at a secret location in Great Britain. This chamber will contain three Spectrums with all the add-ons a professional gamestar could want and will be used to determine who is the king or queen of SLIME.

There are two ways in which you can win the chance to be taken into the SLIME CHAMBER for a play-off in the SLIME CHALLENGE: you can enter for the CODENAME MAT hi-score challenge or you can submit a written entry by answering two questions and completing a limerick. It's up to you. Three places in the SLIME CHALLENGE are up for grabs, one for the CODENAME MAT hi score winner and two for the written entry winners.

The three winners will be taken to the SLIME CHAMBER and made to play a brand new MICROMEGA game, which no-one outside MICROMEGA will have seen or played — so it's game playing skill that will be tested.

To enter the CODENAME MAT category, you'll need to



Jet Set Willy solved
Trashman 22,132
Nifty Lifty 27,118
Monty Mole 2,058
Frank'n Stein 201
Stagecoach 180,106 **Travel with Trashman** 1,549
Boulder Dash 1,957
Skool Daze 37,110
Beach Head 54,500
Booty 24
Monty is Innocent 2min.28secs.
Potty Pigeon 1,217
Ghostbusters 31,600
Steve Jarman, Newtown, Powys.

Sabre Wulf 3,000,045 at 100%
Dark Star 8,710, 15 planets
John Capel with the help of Jason Smith, Preston, Lancs.

Skool Daze 16,560
Harrier Attack 29,342
Knight Lore 44% complete
Raid Over Moscow 37,210
Cyclone 16,560
Andrew (Pooge) Douglas (15) Hull, N.Humberside

Underwurlde Completed at 86%
Pyjamarama 96%
Sabre Wulf 442,005
T.L.L. 101,474
Frank 'n Stein L20
Atic Atac Completed at 985,833
Code Name Mat 1,080
Chuckie Egg L29 235,520
Death Chase 514,968
Jet Pac 836,889
Garry Lynch (14) Edinburgh, Scotland

Pyjamarama completed 88%
Underwurlde 79,658 completed at 30%
Pheenix 55,720
CDS Pool 1,050
Sabre Wulf 97,365 at 54%
Pssst 72,590
Micro Olympics 100m:8.2; 200m:16.18; 400m:37.6; 1500m:188.44; Disc.71.60m; Hammer:86; 58m;Javelin: 102.35
Lords of Midnight Completed after 29 days
Jeremy Burrows (15) Doncaster, S.Yorkshire

DT's Decathlon day 1 310,136; day 2 552,109
Pyjamarama completed 87% 129,328
Beach Head Competed with 129,328
Sebastian (none poke user) Sampson Chertsey, Surrey

DT's Decathlon day 1 204,524; day 2 215,367
Sabre Wulf 210,550 at 93%
Chuckie Egg Level32 at 416,530
Craig Eamon Braintree, Essex

Stop the Express 18,705 stopped 3 times in a row.
The Wild Bunch completed 92%
Buggy Blast 18,750
Skool Daze 19,480
Double Trouble World saved 5 times in a row
Starstrike 980,760 on level 1
James Whalley, Preston, Lancashire
Ghostbusters 105,500
Cyclone 10,255 couldn't get any further because his fuse blew
Anthony Morris, Isle of Wight.

Ghostbusters ½90,200
Sabre Wulf 2,035,655 at 88%
Pssst 79,890
Wanted! Monty Mole 10,655
Lindsay Robertson (14), Aberdeen, Scotland.

DT's Decathlon day 1 354,930 day 2 733,280
Automania 21872, first car 2nd lap
Hunchback 766,320 4 Ezmeraldas
Atic Atac 98% complete
Pyjamarama 88% complete
Chequered Flag Silverstone 1:08.08; Paul Richard 1:22.38; Brands Hatch 1:17.76
J.P.Robinson, Seisdon, Wolverhampton.

Beach Head 102800
Zzoom 98760
Hunchback 1,600,700
Sabre Wulf complete
Martin Riby (15), Milford Haven.

Jetpac 3,560,250
Ian Howard(14), Wollaton, Nottingham.

OU FACE
ME CHALLENGE??!!

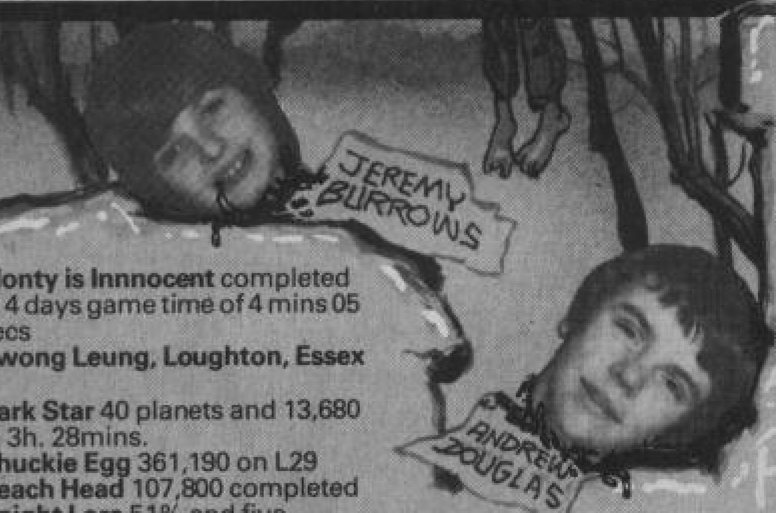
d games coming your way — just read on . . .

send your hi-score on that game to the CODENAME MAT SLIME CHALLENGE at PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB together with your name, address, phone number and the validating code for your claimed score.

If you want to send in a written entry (on the back of a postcard or envelope) send it to SLIME CHALLENGE ANSWERS at PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB, again giving your name, address and phone number.

A DAY IN THE LIFE, Micromega's latest release, is a multi-screen extravaganza dedicated to the man behind the Spectrum (and a whole lot else). It is your task to guide Clive on his journey to Buckingham Palace to receive his DCBE. . . .

Suburban super-hero Clive's special day has arrived — he is to be made a Dame Commander of the British Empire. He hates travelling to work but will willingly face its horrors today! He outwits the mechanised terrors of his home, getting his clothes and keys. He ignores all perils to grab a bite on the way to the station where, jostled by commuters but neatly avoiding the staff, he uses the cash till and claims a stray brolly before leaping gallantly aboard the already departing 8.25. Help, no Financial times! Without comment he leaps out next stop to grab one before the train carries on . . . otherwise it's the dreaded Waiting Room for him. Into the city, and the bank, the pub and the restaurant all beckon. Coping with the indifferent cashiers is easy — he serves himself. As for the pub, a quick pint and he's out (no Guinless wonder, is our Clive). Carlo's Bistro is a bit dodgy, what with the fuss over the wine, but he gets away into the Underground and copes knowingly with the usual tangle of corridors, officials and massed fellow-sufferers, and emerges by the shops. His shoes dirtied, Clive impulse-buys a pair Her Majesty would approve of (Elizabeth the First, that is). It's a hair-raising journey today, so avoiding the grazing C5's it's into the Barber's — the Lady Di look, please — and the Chemist's . . . and still he is only part of the way towards Buckingham Palace.



Monty is Innnocent completed in 4 days game time of 4 mins 05 secs
Kwong Leung, Loughton, Essex

Dark Star 40 planets and 13,680 in 3h. 28mins.
Chuckie Egg 361,190 on L29
Beach Head 107,800 completed
Knight Lore 51% and five charms
Star Strike 915,800 on L5
Skool Daze 14,060
Kevin McKeown, Co.Tyrone, N.Ireland

Chukie Egg 210,090 on L15
Jetpac around 1,000,000
Ant Attack 5 girls
Stonkers completed
Sabre Wulf Complete, 125,090 with 76%
Psytrax 39%
Underwurlde completed, 25,000 at 20%
Kung Fu Black belt
Cavelon complete
Atic Atac complete, 88,000 at 97% in 51 mins
Mark Lawler (14.5), Solihull, West Midlands.

Knight Lore 94%
Underwurld 92%
Kung Fu Black Belt 372 on L5
Football Manager 5 top of division, 4 F.A. Cup wins, overall 99%
Star Strike 587,065
Nicky Potter (13), Scarborough, N.Yorks.

Ant Atac 52,693
Lunar Jetman261,550
Underwurlde completed 31st November
Knight Lore completed 27th December
Bugaboo 29 secs
DT's Decathlon Javelin 136m; Discus 77.5; Hurdles 8.95; 100m 7.65
Richard Baker, Sevenoakes, Kent

Bugaboo 59 seconds
The Hobbit completed
Match Day won the F.A.cup
Pogo 104,000
Beach Head 143,400
Booty 78 items of treasure
Chuckie Egg 532,690
Fighter Pilot 12 planes shot down
Skool Daze 14,320
Technician Ted 13 tasks completed
The Train Game 180 on level 7
Pinball Wizard 36,373
Kokotoni Wilf completed
Pheenix 78,235
DT's Decathlon day 1 1,325,726; day 2 579,385
Sean Rowe, Worthing, Sussex.
Sean says his Mum did Oracles Cave by herself 'because she is a bit of a dragon'

Cookie 18,280 on level 12
Jetpac 138,050
M.J.Hopwood Stevenage, Herts.

DT's Decathlon day 1 479,650; day 2 439,990
Pi-Balled 2,538
Chuckie Egg 244,960
Bullseye beat the computer 5 legs to 0
CDS Pool 1,360 frame 3
Atic Atac 72%
Mr.Wimpey 34,000
Stuart Munger, Wolverhampton, West Midlands.
Stuart's brother's six and half year old friend has scored 59,560 on Bear Bovver

Penetrator 132,240 with 6 lives
Dark Star complete with 6000
Halls of Things 1,910
John Bannerman, Safat, Kuwait.

Pyjamarama Completed in 4 days
Planetoids 144,000 with six ships left
Sabre Wulfe completed 54%
Atic Atac completed
Underwurlde completed
Jetpac 401,000 (about)
Hulk completed
Airwolf Got past first wall after only 30 minutes.
DT's Decathlon broke my Spectrum after 8 days
JSW completed with the 'no monsters' poke
Sabreman, Billericay, Essex.

Ad Astra 354,640
Ant Attack 164,210
Bugaboo 9 seconds
Sabre Wulf 2,845,980 98% complete
Atic Attack 2min. 3sec. 93% complete
Automania 16,980 all 10 cars
Harrier Attack 35,000
3D Deathchase L44 509,896
Skool Daze 6,420
TLL 12,460
Cyclone All crates and civilians rescued 4 times.
Hero 74,820
Factory Breackout 44,860 on epsilon.
Miles (Groovy) Auckland, Stubbington, Hants.

DT's Decathlon Day 1 384,435 Day 2 703,620
Skool Daze 9,560
Starstrike 193,600
Pyjamarama Completed
Match Point Beat the computer at all levels
Kung Fu Blue belt but my friend Andy got a black belt on the 9th day.
Beach Head completed with 130,500
Danger Mouse in DT Saved the world 8 times in a row (Thanks, LM)
Ghostbusters Completed with £37,100
Neil Stewart (13), Stepps, Glasgow.

The winners of the written section of the SLIME CHALLENGE will have answered the two following questions correctly and completed the limerick in the wittiest manner.

1. When did sir Clive receive his knighthood?

2. How many stations are there on the shortest journey from Liverpool Street to St James' Park (hint, look at the Underground Map appearing somewhere else in this issue.)?

A day in the life with our Clive
Is a struggle to keep him alive
But he laughs at the malice
And reaches the Palace

3...............................

Can you face the SLIME CHALLENGE? Could you cope with the FAME and ADULATION of having your picture in CRASH? Would your friends speak to you again if you were crowned MONARCH OF SLIME? Dare you enter this competition, all you creepy-crawly slimy toadies? Eh?

DEADLINE: APRIL 25TH

Crash Competition

GAMES, CLOTHES & DIFFERENT TO

Forget Emmys, ignore Oscars, trash Tonys — at last the super trophy to amaze the world can be unveiled — the BRIAN. (Well, not just yet).

This is not an ordinary trophy — no boring arrival award ceremonies to sit through, watching people eat expensive dinners in hired suits with 'Gosh, I'd never dreamt I'd win' speeches tucked in their pockets. No! the BRIAN trophy is a one off, totally unique, Primarily Imbalanced, very different award which will be won by one person, and once only.

And to make the whole process more democratic, there's no need to be nominated, you can nominate yourself. Good Eh? No secret ballots, no crispy envelopes to be opened on stage, just prepare a nomination form for yourself, mail it in to us by May 28th 1985 and you could be the first, and last, person in the whole wide world to have won a BRIAN.

Your nomination form has to be a bit different to stand a chance of winning. OK, a lot different then — it's simply no use writing 'I hereby nominate myself, Albert Scroggins, for the BRIAN award and I claim my five pounds Chalky White.' Oh No.

What you need to do is play BRIAN BLOODAXE produced by THE EDGE — play it quite a lot — and draw a map of the locations contained in the game. There's a hundred and four screens in there, waiting for you to pilot Brian through, and you'll need a nice clean piece of paper to draw them on.

But that is not all. A map only nominates you in the 'entrant' section of the BRIAN award. And that's just not good enough for you is it — you want to be one of the winner nominees, of which there will be 36.

To get shortlisted, and stand a chance of winning the coveted BRIAN so you can put it on a pedestal (they can't touch you for it you know, it's perfectly legal), you're going to have to add descriptions of the locations on your map.



All the screens in BRIAN BLOODAXE, some singly some taken together in groups, should suggest an area or location in Great Britain — which you'll remember, Brian is trying to conquer.

The wittiest list of locations — which ought to reflect the spirit of the game, Primary Imbalance and all — will be looked at in conjunction with the map and this will form your completed nomination.

Maps should be sent to us, at PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB clearly marked with your name and address and with your list of locations either firmly attached or written out on the back.

The overall winner, in the opinion of the judges, will be awarded the mysterious BRIAN, a copy of the next game to be released by THE EDGE, and a cap and T-shirt. Five runners up will win a T-shirt and a copy of the new game before it is generally released and then the next thirty nominees selected for the quality of their maps and wittiness of their lists will also be sent a copy of the new EDGE game.


SOMETHING
COMPLETELY
WIN!!!
Get those pencils sharpened — and remember, we can't promise to send your map back to you after the judging unless you send enough postage with it. Good Raiding!
BRIAN'S TROPHY
THE EDGE



LETTERS

Hello, letter writing fans, Lloyd here again, refreshed after the LET show at Olympia. NO, I didn't go, but all the others did, so the office was pleasantly quiet for a change!

This month has seen an enormous quantity of mail come in, some of it really quite intelligent too, so if I use only bits and pieces of some people's letter, forgive me (it's the 'precious space' bit again you know). Thank you to 'Desparate Hyper Loader' who went to the trouble of writing the same letter three times to grab my attention, and the answer to your question is, YES IT DOES. Regarding hyper load tapes, try loading at very low volume levels as well, since many of them respond better this way. Anyway, onto the real business in hand, and the letter of the month, which wins £12 worth of software for its writer. . . .

SUMMING UP

Dear Lloyd,
May I first take the time to congratulate the Production Team on behalf of Mr Carl Irzin and myself for an excellent magazine, the contents of which are first class. (I buy the magazine, he reads it but he buys YOUR COMPUTER, and I have to show him what a reader orientated magazine is). As a Spectrum owner since 1982 when the latest 'ace' program to hit the market was *City Bomber* from Titan (now selling discreetly packaged games that Joan Collins would ban, let alone Mary Whitehouse), I felt it was about time I made my first correspondence on the progress of the whole industry (well as much as I can fit in without Roger Kean moaning about how valuable space is).

1. Hardware. As competition dictates, so the price of the Spectrum dropped by £50 to £129.95 making it the most attractive home computer on the market, much to the annoyance of £179.95 owners like myself. Now, with no 16K machine available, the 48K machine can be found for as little as £79.95 due to the fall in the price of the Spectrum ***1***.

The microdrives finally arrived but sadly haven't been accepted as widely as I believe they should have been. Apart from a few formatting problems at first, all my replacements have functioned faultlessly since. Let's hope a few companies start to produce software on microdrive now they only cost £1.95 each (come on companies — do your bit)!

The numbers of addons have really been outstanding, catering for every aspect of computing.

In addition to Interface 1 and microdrive, I also have the Low Profile Keyboard, Protocol 4 joystick interface and Currah Microspeech. Other add-ons include Monitors, Disc Drives, ROM cartridges, Printers, Memory Boards and many interfaces to connect anything from Music Keyboards to Robots.

2. Software. How can anyone complain about the quality of the top Spectrum software on the market at the moment? Two years ago, who would have thought we would see programs of the quality of *Knight Lore*, *Lords of Midnight*, *Tir Na Nog* and many more produced by innovative companies. By the time this is read these standards may have been surpassed.

However, a sad story also exists with certain software companies who have far more expertise in marketing and hype than in programming skills. Far too many companies are trying to rip off the customers with more content in the adverts than in the program they are selling, and fully deserve to get the CRASH thumbs down as did *The Great Space Race*. (Did the quarter of a million go towards designing the boxes? Very nice they are too).

As for the future, apart from the ludicrously high price of software (excepting budget games, now improving very quickly), the next two years could be interesting. For instance, large adventure games could be possible using the microdrive to access further data during the course of the game. Food for thought? Well perhaps something to look forward to with anticipation.

3. Publications. A lot of excellent material has been released which delves deep into the secrets of the Spectrum, both in terms of hardware and operating system as well as general topics to do with the use of the computer. These include titles such as *An Introduction to PASCAL*, *The Complete Guide to solving the Hobbit* and *Machine Code for the Absolute Beginner* as well as other titles.

To sum up, the last two years have given me great pleasure in using the Spectrum, to the extent where it now commands a room of its own in my house (due to a little white lie to the wife claiming I needed a study to have some peace and quiet in order to revise for my work exams). I think us Spectrum Owners should be proud that a machine with so little going for it should achieve so much in a short time.

A bit 'Churchill-ish' that, wasn't it?

Keep on hacking
Allan P. Dixon, Hull

Well it certainly brought tears to Roger (he was almost named after Winston Churchill) Kean's eyes, Allan. £12 worth of software for your sentiments, as soon as you let us know what you want.

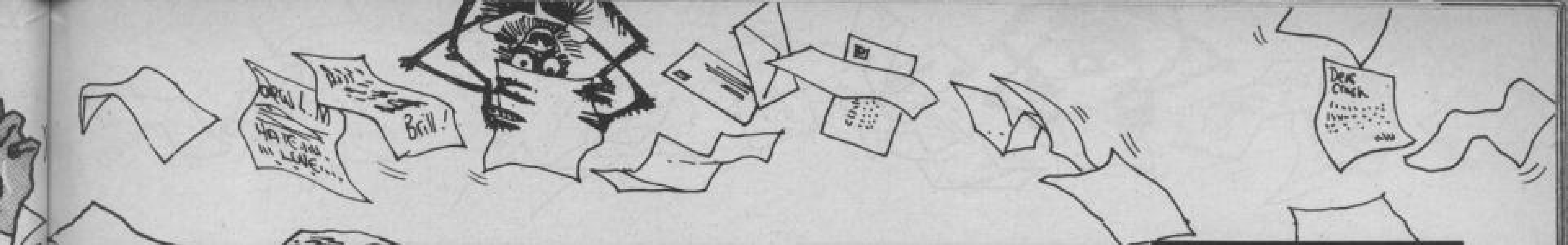


GHOST-DUSTERS

Our review of Activision's game Ghostbusters *certainly stirred up a hornets' nest of complaint. Lots of you thought we had been very unfair. Here come some bits of some of the letters.*
LM

I wish to complain about your review of *Ghostbusters* in issue 13. One reviewer stated that he found it impossible to return to the streets after catching a slimer. This fault only occurs if the ghost trap is placed on the road. I thoroughly enjoy the game and have spent many hours mastering and completing it.
Nicholas Shaw, Kirby-in-Ashfield, Notts.

The review of *Ghostbusters* is unfair on Activision. I would rate this game higher than *Jetpac*, *Wheelie*, *Code Name Mat* and *Blue Thunder* all



added together
Roger Godfrey (12), Brighouse, W. Yorks

I think your review of Activision's *Ghostbusters* is totally unfair. If the reviewers had bothered to play the game for long enough they would have found out that yes the game does crash if the trap is fired on the road, but it is possible to take your men onto the pavement where ghosts can easily be caught without the program crashing. I think *Ghostbusters* is very addictive and not boring or slow.
Mark Atkin, Kirby-in-Ashfield, Notts

A friend of the previous letter writer no doubt
LM



I am writing to warn people that *Ghostbusters* does NOT take Kempston joystick. I wasted time and money taking the game back to the shop a grand total of five times! I think that if the inlay of a game states that you can use a joystick, you should be able to. So now I am stuck with a crappy game that does not take Kempston joystick.
Gary Hedger, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey

I noticed on reading the Feb issue that there was a review of *Ghostbusters*. 'Ah Good,' I thought, because I had recently acquired the game and had found it highly addictive and exciting. What horror then, when to my amazement I found it received 60% overall!
White Dwarf, Liverpool

Normally I, believing in your capabilities, will take note of the score given by CRASH, but after reading your review and then playing the game I could not disagree more! How can you say it is boring? You have to be alert in case Marshmallow Men or Slimers.

The part I disagree with most was the way your reviewers compared it with the Commodore 64 version as if expecting an equivalent game. We all know that the CBM 64 has better sound and graphics, so why compare? For those people who agree with me, here is an account number for 83,000. Type in the name HELLO and then 95766010.
Stephen Davies, Chelmsford, Essex

The CBM 64 has better sound — no disagreement, but I wouldn't say it has better graphics, better sprites yes, but different graphics. Actually, the game on the Spectrum should (because of increased memory) have been tougher, longer or better to play than the CBM 64 version. To those complainers who felt the CRASH review team failed to understand the game or played it insufficiently, I must tell you that we were playing it on the Commodore as soon as that version arrived, loved the music but still found the playability lacking.
One more. . . .

Who is to blame for this outrage? What kind of person could degrade a game to such an extent? The review didn't even say that this game MAY appeal to a special kind of person. Mainly me!
Ken Bentley (15), Woodley, Reading, Berks

Phew! This must be the biggest set back for CRASH since YOUR SPECTRUM came out! Gosharootie (as Loony would say), what can I say? Sorry? I still find the game a bit lacking myself, but then, I'm not a special kind of person, and the CRASH team generally thought that while the CBM 64 version succeeded because of the music, the Spectrum version failed because of the poor sound (the tune was even flat, come on , admit it). I'm convinced this game has done well because the film was a box office smash, but then, we're all entitled to our own opinions!
Just to show how opinions can differ, here's another...
LM

POLE POSITION

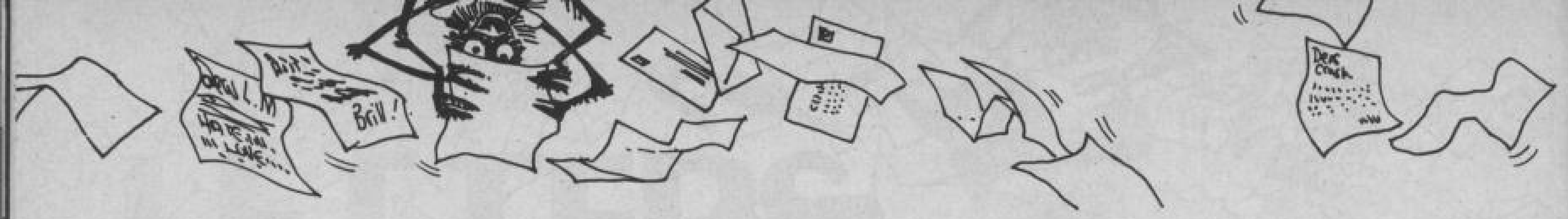
Dear Lloyd,
I am writing to warn readers of Atarisoft's *Pole Position*. This game should not be allowed to be sold. I just went out and bought it, rushed home to load it as I had heard so much about it. I was totally disgusted with it.
Craig Crawford, Gracemount, Edinburgh

Dear grovelling Lloyd,
I am in disagreement on just one of your reviews in the Christmas issue, and that is the one on *Pole Position* which I thought should have got at least 80% as it is pretty good.
Penfold, Appley bridge, Nr Wigan, Lincs

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER!

Dear Lloyd,
On reading the letter from Michael Austin in the December issue of CRASH I became more and more annoyed. I have NEVER found a game which can't be copied. If I find a game which can't be copied on my 30 watt double deck, Brixton style, 'Ghetto' Blaster, then I use a tape copier program or I hack the game to pieces and work out a routine to put in the loader so it saves once loaded. I must now praise your magazine which is ultra-brilliant and which beats other magazines out of sight.
Barry McEvoy, South Croydon, Surrey

Do you also play lots of very LOUD heavy Metal on your Ghetto Blaster whilst hacking games to bits, I wonder? Of course, you're obviously a talented hacker, Barry, but there are those logic-innocents who play games and have very little clue of how to go about the arcane fiddling you're talking about (like me!).
LM





VAT OUTRAGE

Dear Lloyd,
Thank you for printing my last two letters.

I wrote to my MP concerning VAT on reading matter and enclose his reply. I'm sure you'll be pleased to see his views. Also enclosed is a letter to him from Barney Hayhoe, a Treasury Minister. I'm sure you'll find that interesting too.

I have two complaints about CRASH which ought to be remedied. One is Angus Ryall and the other is Oliver Frey.

Angus Ryall may be a fine strategist but if he cannot tell the truth in his articles (I refer to Scorpio), then he is as much use to CRASH readers as a Spectrum covered in raspberry jelly.

Oliver Frey is no doubt a fine artist but please tell him to stop drawing revolting pictures like that on page 94 of the January issue of CRASH. If this continues CRASH will have to be X rated.

James Penwell, Beeston, Nottingham

Thanks, James for sending the two letters which I quote below. Meanwhile I can confidentially tell you that the much-maligned John Merry of Scorpio Gamesworld went to say hello to Angus Ryall on the Games Workshop stand at the LET show at Olympia — and he was carrying a jar of raspberry jelly come to think of it. Oliver Frey has been taken ill as a result of your comments regarding his drawings. Anyway, you can blame Robin Candy for such illustrations because he always insists on plenty of gore.

Anyway, here are the two letters James received from his MP. . . .

'I have had a large postbag from constituents concerned at the proposals to introduce VAT on books and newspapers.

I am totally opposed to this move, as I think it could have a disastrous effect on the publishing and newspaper industries, and on those who seek enjoyment and instruction from reading. I believe a tax on learning would be quite wrong, and I have made my views known to the Chancellor.

From Anthony Steen MP

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
Dear Anthony,
You wrote to Nigel Lawson on 11 and 17 December enclosing these letters from two constituents about the possible extension of value added tax to books.

As you will appreciate, Treasury Ministers are receiving many similar representations at this time. Indeed a number of lobbying campaigns are being organised by the particular interests concerned. In response Nigel is making it quite clear that the Government favours a shift in the burden of taxation from taxes on earnings to taxes on spending. This means that the indirect tax base may have to be further extended so that income tax can be further reduced. The Government has no set views at present on how this might be best done.

The National Book Committee have sent Nigel two documents which set out their detailed arguments against VAT on books and journals. Their representations are being carefully considered.

Barney Hayhoe

Not long after this issue is out on the streets, we shall know whether VAT goes on mags or not. Let's hope not otherwise the CRASH staff will all have to donate 15% or whatever of their earnings to the company coffers!

In the time-honoured CRASH tradition of allowing professional programmers to pretend that they are also real readers — may I present Mr. Paul Hutchinson. . . .
LM

XAVIOUR II

Dear Lloyd,
Saw the review . . . very fair I thought. *Xaviour II* should be finished soon. It's a much better game. Here's a quick summary of features (don't tell anyone I told you):

256 Caverns (entirely unique)!
80 plus Passages
64 large Creature types
256 Objects
24 types of object
Fully definable keyboard

Xaviour takes to his GLOBE (he can get in or out, jump and walk) to travel through the caverns to retrieve all that is his people's culture. Keys open chests, nets capture creatures, energy objects replenish/deplete his strength. The passages are full of flame gushers and lava droppers, timing being needed to negotiate them. Real conditions for movement are used, enabling omni-directional movement (not just 8 way), ie acceleration, momentum, friction and gravity. So I hope this gets me closer to getting a game to be a CRASH SMASH.

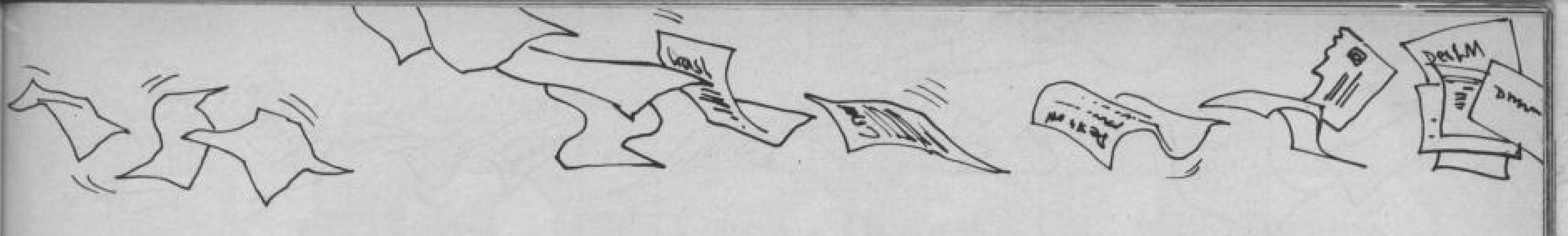
I've written a short game which is to be broadcast on LBC's Computer Club slot on Sundays at 3.30pm. So if you want a free 100% machine code game, tune in (if you can pick the station up).

By the way, the Jetman POKEs are not my fault, Robin Candy left bits out. I'm innocent!

Paul Hutchinson, Upper Norwood, London SE19

. . . and after that short commercial break, we return you to the programme. . . .

And after news of new games, news of new magazines has been causing uncertainty in some parts of the land. . . .
LM



TOO DAZZZLING

Dear Lloyd,
I have a complaint to make. Your magazine should be completely in black-and-white. To use as much colour as CRASH does is wrong for two reasons; first, as you keep telling us, colour is very expensive and the magazine would be cheaper without it; second, it causes me severe embarrassment when I open it on my daily commuter train into London. My fellow pin-striped first class travellers look at me in a very peculiar way when they see brightly coloured pictures and advertisements.

You may not realise this, but the brightest colour they can stand is the pink of the Financial Times or, at a pinch, the little red flash on the Economist. Of course, they peer as closely as they do because the only colourful publications they are aware of are the 'girlie' magazines. (I am told this is true; I have never read one myself).

So please, have a little more decorum and change to tasteful black-and-white.
David LeMoir, Letchworth, Herts

I know exactly how you feel, David, having swayed myself into London strap-hanging on a Metropolitan Line train morning after morning for years (couldn't have afforded first class even if they had it). As you may have seen from last month's issue, the last point in your letter about Robin Candy, which I have omitted to print, has been remedied!
LM

A LOAD OF GARBAGE

Dear Trash, or is it Crash? Pay attention and allow me to educate you. Please tell your reviewers not to make comparisons between Commodore and Spectrum games because you know as well as I that the Commodore 64 is clearly in a different league and is superior to the Spectrum in every way. This, as we all know, is proved when it comes to comparing *Ghostbusters* for example, as one reviewer did in the Feb issue. You would be forgiven for thinking that he hadn't seen the Commodore version when he wrote it, to quote one of the poor jealous fool's lines; 'I take the pleasure to say that the graphics are no different on the Spectrum version whatsoever.'

How did he get away with a lie like that? If he had been even the slightest bit unbiased he would have said something like:
'Commodore version: Superb arcade quality Smoothness, Sound — better than the record, overall 10/10. . . .
'Spectrum version: gaudy little graphics, poxy sound, and excuse me while I laugh my head off.'

So take heed all you silly little pirates who call yourselves Spectrum owners. Don't even try to criticise the Commodore 64, you will just embarass yourselves, and if you need to be jealous of another computer try one that's closer matched to your own — the Jupiter Ace for example.

So try to muster some respect for the 64 and all it's done for computer entertainment as we know it. I hope you Spectrum owners have learned something from this letter.
Mark Roberts, Ealing, London

I'm tempted to give the address in full! Better not, anyway it's probably not the right one. Well, you little piece of digested and voided cow food, I don't really think I have to say very much to this load of garbage as I'm sure plenty of CRASH readers will do that for me. But I will say that your last remark is strictly inaccurate as far as this country is concerned. It is definitely the Spectrum that has done the most for games entertainment and the 64 that has followed.
LM

SPECTRUM TIP

Dear Lloyd,
Please could you publish this letter for people who get infuriated when they are typing in a complicated program and then look back several lines only to discover that a couple of important letters are missing. You pressed them all right, but perhaps too lightly.

The answer to all this is a 'beep', so that each time you press a key correctly, the Spectrum 'beeps'. before you type in your program, type:
POKE 23609,99 (Enter)
To get rid of the 'beep', type:
POKE 23609,9 (Enter)
Charles Marshall, Tansley, Nr Matlock, Derbyshire

Thanks for the tip, which many people might find useful. In fact, if you look in your Spectrum manual I think you will not only find the same suggestion but also the POKE itself.
LM



AN OMISSION

Dear Lloyd,
I'm writing to you because of what I think is an important omission in your coverage of Spectrum software. This is in the coverage of serious software and programming utilities, eg Compilers and Assemblers. I have every issue of CRASH bar the first but I can only find four or five such reviews and most of these were written by entrants to your reviewers' competition, the notable exceptions being the excellent reviews of *White Lightning* and Hisoft's *Ultrakit*. Let me hasten to add that this is not a deficiency in our literary diet that is solely confined to CRASH; all magazines, including *YOUR SPECTRUM* which claims to be for the more serious Spectrum user, are sadly lacking in this department.

I am sure that a fairly large proportion of software buyers at some time or another consider buying one of these packages and, as almost all of this type of software is expensive, help is usually needed.

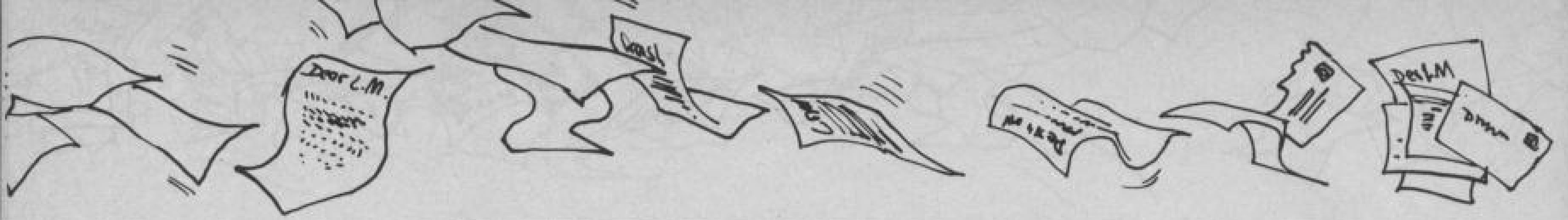
I understand that your team of young reviewers may not be able to whip up the enthusiasm to review anything that does not entail blasting little green aliens to bits, but Roger Kean himself has reviewed other software that has fallen into this other type of category.

In fact I suggest maybe a couple of pages each month for such reviews, indeed, when you consider that the Hall of Slime has a page to itself then it doesn't seem much to ask for.

So Lloyd, let's see you use your not inconsiderable influence to push for more reviews of the thinking man's type of software. You never know, such a revelation might even lead to a much needed increase in your salary.
Mark Bilton, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear

Flattery will get you everywhere! Take a look at this issue and you will see I've already done it for you! Tech Niche will be a regular clump of pages devoted to more serious programs and relevant hardware as well. Some things lined up for future issues include Assembler/Editors, Compilers, Modems and Gumby learns machine code sloooowly. (I'm not sure who the hell Gumby is, but that's what it says on the editorial production board anyway). And as for 'Your Spectrum', isn't it simply just lacking? NO, I'm sorry, I never said that.
LM





BOP AS YOU ZAP

Dear Lloyd,
Reading John Tapper's comments several issues back about having loud music playing whilst you assault your Spectrum, set me and my friend to thinking, and the results of all that cogitation and burnt wood is the following list. Here it is, Volume I of 'Bop as you Zap' from Kan't tel Records:

Sabre Wulf
Born to be wild/ Steppenwolf
Knight Lore
Bark at the moon/Ozzie Osbourne
Delta Wing
Shot down in flames/ ACDC
Hunch Back
Hell's Bells/ACDC
Skool Daze
Problem Child/ACDC
Halls of the Things
Shapes of Things/ Yardbirds
Manic Miner
Going Underground/ The Jam
D.T. Decathlon
Born to run/Bruce Springsteen
Jumping Jack
Jumping Jack Flash/ Rolling Stones
Lords of Midnight
Riders on the Storm/ The Doors
Molar Maul
Massachusetts/The Bee Gees (geddit?)
Lunar Jetman
Dark Side of the Moon/ Pink Floyd
Night Gunner
Bomber/Motorhead
Automania
Cars/Gary Numan

Sorry about all the Heavy Metal, but he did say LOUD music.
J. Kimmons, Croydon, Surrey

When playing any game like Antics, Monty Mole, Mutant Sheep Fight It out With Acid Camels at the Dawn of Time etc, I find any track from 'Animals' by Pink Floyd can be helpful, although depending on your frame of mind at the time, the Smiths' 'Meat is Murder' might be more appropriate.
LM



POETICALLY YOURS. . . .





Dear CRASH,
Two times I have written to CRASH,
For the greed of software, not cash.
The letters haven't been printed before,
But with this poem I might just score.
Sabre Wulf completion was in my first letter
Followed by playing tips to make people better.
This time I write with a bit of craze,
For I have been moved up a year in Skool Daze.
Perhaps somebody somewhere has left Skool,
Their daze are over and I'm a fool.
Atic Atac, also I have just completed,
With the aid of your map (I still cheated).
Infinite lives poke I had put in,
The poke was the only way I could win.
CRASH is the best magazine by far,
The reviews are excellent (they really are).
I could go on forever about your good side,
But there are thousands (I've never lied).
IF again this letter isn't printed I'll cry,
And never again buy CRASH (that's a lie).
IF it is, could I have Alien 8 and Finders Keepers,
Don't forget to print it, or for me its weepers.
Martin Clark, Leeds, Yorkshire

If I gave Alien 8 and Finders Keepers,
I'd be for the high jump and window leapers,
For I'm only allowed £12 to award
To one letter per month in accord
With laws laid down to be seen
In operation by His Eminence RM Kean
LM



ON ACCOUNT

Dear Lloyd Mangram,
I have been reading CRASH ever since issue 5. I find your reviews quite good as they have three reviewers giving SEPARATE opinions — this is very good because one reviewer only has ONE view.

I would also like to point out to CRASH readers that the mistakes in CRASH are only typing mistakes and NOT spelling mistakes. *(What mistakes . . . ?)*

My cousin has just been introduced to the Spectrum, and ever since reading CRASH has decided to buy one.

Your tips section is good and I find JETMAN hilarious! The tips are helpful, but you tend to print things that don't have to do with anything, like in the one tip about the other boat in *Jet Set Willy* that would sail to an island, when you knew it wouldn't work.

I would like to end my letter on a note about the review of *Ghostbusters*. I thought it was most unfair as the reviewers compared it to the Commodore version. the Commodore has much better sound and we all know the Spectrum has a small speaker. I have a copy of the game and find it fun to play. if anyone wants a sum of over £40,000 type in my name, last first, and for the account 26027404.
Daryll Ng, 2900 Hellerup, Denmark

Not another one! I have to say, at this important juncture, that the reason for comparing the two versions of Ghostbusters *was, in our opinion, valid because APART from the sound, there was very little difference between the two (compared to many conversions one way or the other). And in our opinion, by removing the sound, you removed the best bit of the game. In other words, there wasn't much game there to begin with.*
LM

NO CODES. . ?

Dear Lloyd,
Recently I received a copy of Hewson's *Avalon*. (Previously I had one but my tape recorder got hungry and chewed it up). When I got the new one home I loaded it expecting it to ask for the usual codes, but it didn't. Instead it went straight into the game asking what method of control I wanted. Could you please tell me if this is a unique copy?
Darren Dalton, Luton, Beds.

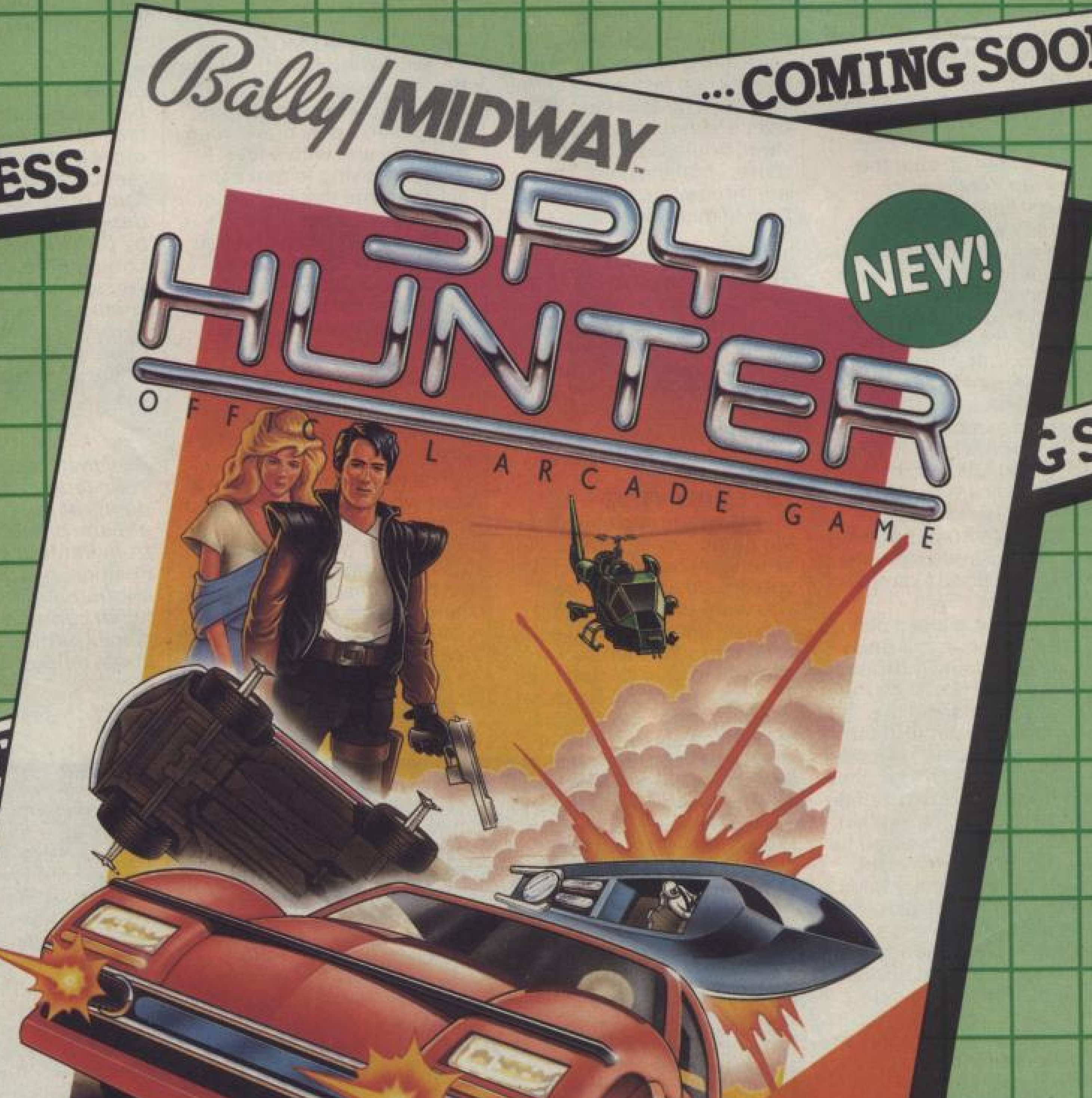
Sounds fairly unique. I wonder whether the cassette contained the pale blue code sheet? It is possible that this is an early or pre-production copy which you have happened on by some error; or perhaps it might be a commercially pirated version. The real people to ask are at Hewson Consultants themselves. They may well be interested to know about it.
LM

Coming Soon on:—

U.S. GOLD

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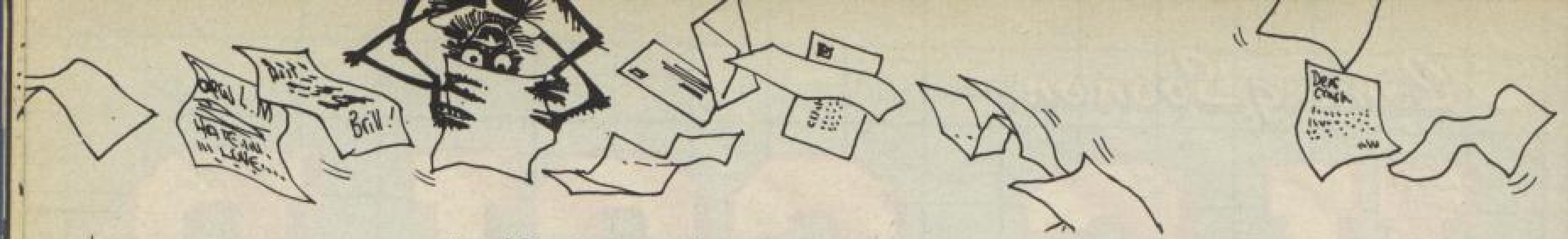
This fast action shooting and driving game puts you in command of an almost unlimited arsenal of weapons... machine guns, oil slicks, smoke screens, heat seeking missiles! Spyhunter, already a number one in arcades across America is now presented for the Spectrum where it is sure to be a winner too!

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THE IDEAL ARCADE

Dear CRASH,
I once read in Derek Brewster's Adventure bit that someone sent in their ideas as to the perfect adventure. So in return, I have written out what makes the perfect arcade game.

PRESENTATION
The graphics must be good in the sense that you can recognise what an object is, ie in *Arcadia* I haven't the foggiest idea of what the aliens are, whereas in *Pheenix* the aliens are definitely birds.

The sound must add to the game. A tune is not always wonderful and sometimes slows the game down like in *Booty*. Ultimate's games have never used tunes but they have nearly continuous sound because they use it for footsteps, aliens appearing etc. If a tune is used it must have an on/off switch.

The inlay card should have an eye-catching cover, screen shots from the game and a humourous storyline, Fantasy is a good example of the last point.

If the game is just a plain 'arcade' game, ie mindless zapping, rescuing girlfriends or eating cherries, then the inlay should explain the game in every detail. If the game is an arcade/adventure like *Atic Atac*, then the inlay should give nothing away. It should just explain your quest and leave you to solve the problems. In the case of Ultimate, they have taken this one step further by giving you your quest cryptically with rhymes.

The game should provide a 'demo mode'. there are 2 types; the 'attract' demo, which shows all the screens, or the 'game in action' demo, which shows some of the screens with the hero in action. In my opinion, the latter is the best, just because it gives an idea of what to expect AND shows how 'you' actually fare against it.

USER FRIENDLINESS
The game must be extremely user-friendly. It must have user-definable keys (this is something that Ultimate still have to learn), plenty of joystick options and a good option is where you can change the game slightly. As such, *Dark Star, Match Day* and *Penetrator* are the only ones like this that I know of. This is not a necessity but if there is any memory left it should be thought of.

Now we come to what I call the 'Oh ****!' part of the game. This is where yours truly is on the last screen of a game with one life left to go. The palms are sweating, the heart is beating faster . . . and I lose my last life. This cause me to cry out in the above-mentioned fashion. I realise that I will have to start all over again and as it took me three hours last time to get there, I pull the plug. There are three ways to cure this type of mental breakdown . . .

THE SAVE FACILITY
This allows you to SAVE the details of where you are, what you are carrying, how many lives you have left, etc, onto tape (rather like an adventure). Only one game I know of does this — *Strangeloop*. Full marks to Virgin, even though the game is unplayable. . . .

THE ENTRY MODE
This is where each level of the game has an entry code. When you begin a new level you are asked which level you want to start at, and if you can enter the level entry code correctly then you are allowed to play on that level. This gets rid of the tedious 'start to finish' route which most games use. There are some disadvantages with this system, however, some magazines (mentioning no names but one of them rhymes with 'Smash') print these codes and nerds like myself can jump straight in at level 8 and not even look at the previous levels. (I still can't complete level 1 of *Wheelie* yet, but I've played on all the other levels. . . .

THE TRAINING MODE
This is the worst of the three, but it is still good at that. The ideal Training Mode should only let you play one screen at a time and with a few things missing to make the actual game that bit harder. *Turmoil*'s trainer is very good in that it won't let you score but does take away lives if you get killed.

You can tell these methods work well by the fact that I am now ****ed off with *Kokotoni Wilf* (because I get to the last level with one life left and get killed off very quickly), but I still play *Wheelie*.

The game must be easy to start with. This is to give you time to 'get the feel' of controlling 'you' and how the nasties work. But it must get harder as the game nears the end. This may sound obvious but it is surprising how many games take hours to get off the first level/screen.

Finally, the game must have a reasonable price, for while I was willing to pay £10 for *Knight Lore*, I am not prepared to be ripped off by paying £10 for *Underwurlde*
Jeff Herbert, Alvechurch, Worcs.

Thanks for the ideas, Jeff. I have to add that it's a pity I couldn't print your actual letter, because it was beautifully written in large-size Gothic script, and proved surprisingly easy to type in on my 1876 Hermes hammerwriter. I have the feeling there are actually more games than you mention which have some form of player-definable design feature, Omega Run *by CRL for one, Soft Proj's* Lode Runner *for another. As you say, some points might seem very obvious, but I agree that there are loads of games that fail to get some of these points anyway.*
LM

Well that's about it for the main letters. Just a few points at the end. I have already printed a snippet from **Penfold***'s letter on* Pole Position, *but he added another dimension to the 'what computer people are' piece I printed recently, and I quote it here, for what it's worth!*

ZX81 — People who wish they had a proper computer.
ZX Spectrum — The working class fella or lass who knows they've got a proper computer.
Vic 20 — People who couldn't buy a good value for money computer to save their lives.
Electron — Snobs who wish they had enough money to buy an I.T.V.
CBM64 — People who get lost trying to fathom out the Elephant's brain.
BBC — Snobs who have the money but not the brains to buy an expensive computer.
Amstrad — People with good eyesight ('cos the writing's green on green).

Thank you Penfold! **Neil Hurst** *from Upper Cumberworth, Near Huddersfield, wants to know why Ultimate advertised* Alien 8 *so in advance of its release, and why the people in Yorkshire are always the last ones to get good games, since it went on sale in London before he could find it locally. Well I can't tell you anything about Ultimate's advertising plans really, because I don't know. I do know that most games are available to stockists the same day everywhere. You should take up the cudgels with your local shops, Neil.*

Vince Kelly *from Bootle, Merseyside writes to praise CRASH Mail Order for their prompt service but asks that as a CRASH Subscriber is he entitled to dock 50p off EACH mail order item ordered. The answer, Vince is YES. The second question is, does this include hardware? And that answer is NO. CRASH Mail Order does not handle much in the way of hardware. The principal reason for this, I am told, is because the cost of packaging and postage is far higher than it is for software, and CRASH Mail Order works on a post-included basis, so hardware would not be very economical. Manufacturers can afford to do this, of course, because they aren't paying anything like the wholesale prices that CRASH Mail order would have to pay. However, keep your eyes peeled - there may be some changes in that before very much longer.*

Finally, **Neil Durrant** says he is looking for a penfriend who also owns a Spectrum. Neil is 13 and has owned his Spectrum for two years and has a wide range of software. He is also beginning to learn machine code. If anyone would like to become a penfriend of Neil's, here is his address: **Neil Durrant, 7 Broomshaw Road, Barming, Maidstone, Kent ME16 9HS.**

Letters to the CRASH FORUM should be addressed to: LLOYD MANGRAM, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.



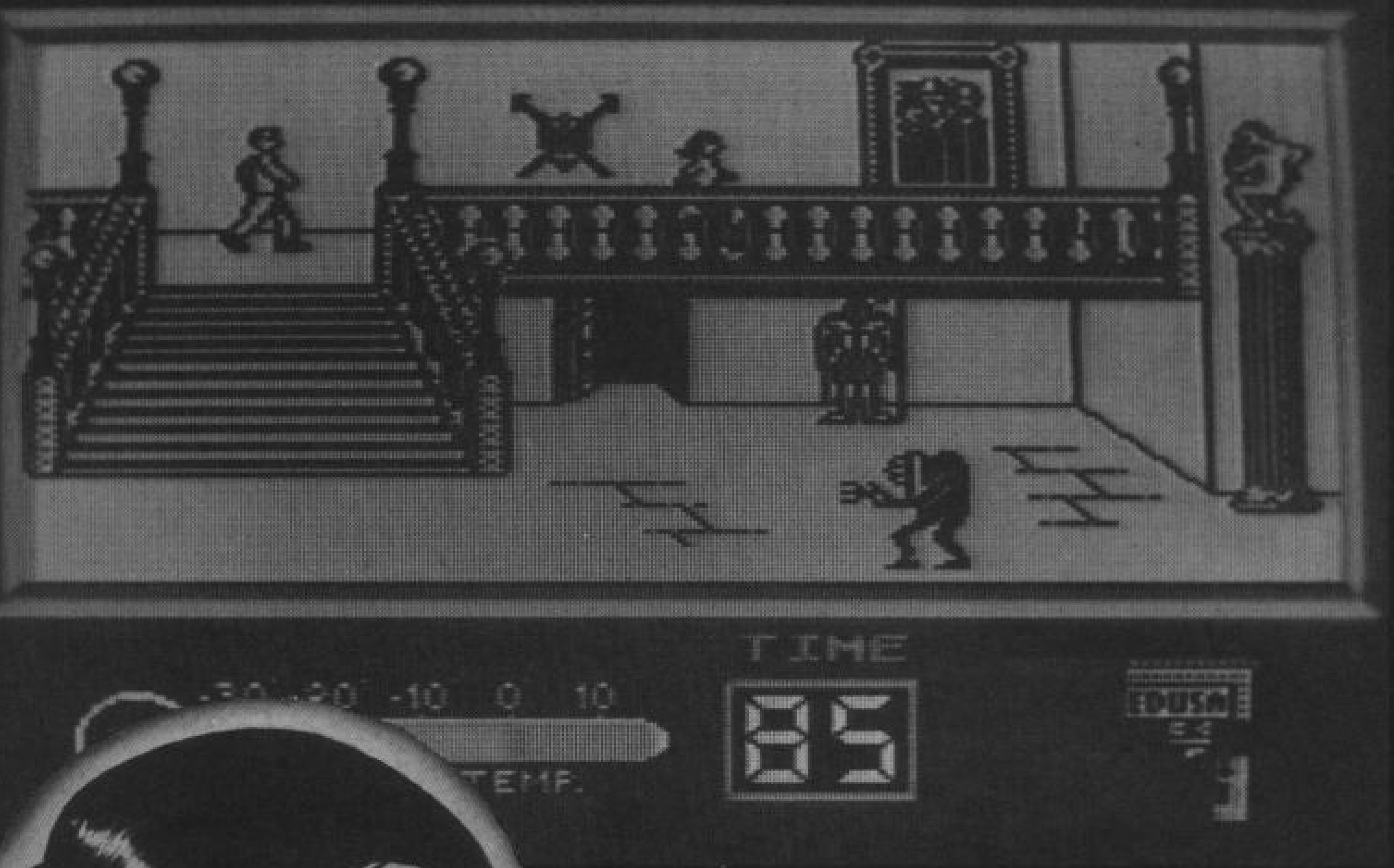
THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

But a new horror game from CRL will help take the sting out of the effort. Just dance the TIME WARP to Transylvania and get it on with this competition for the ROCKY HORROR Computer game.

'Don't Dream it, Play it' is CRL's slogan for their Spectrum version of Richard O'Brien's Rocky Horror Show — the hit seventies stage musical which is still going on tour today. The Rocky Horror Show (also a film *The Rocky Horror* Picture *Show*) tells the eventful story of Janet Weiss and Brad Majors, a couple of innocent American teenagers who stumble across a strange castle on a dark, rainy and thundery night, little knowing what is in store for them.

Guaranteed to be the only non-sexist program available in 'Hot Patootievision', THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW from what we've seen so far looks set to capture all the fun of the original stage version with a few twists, turns and surprises held in store.

Retailing at £8.95, the package containing the cassette will include an A3 poster and a window sticker to help get you in the mood for the entertainment that lies in store. By entering this competition you could be one of the first people to savour the full flavour of the ROCKY HORROR SHOW in the comfort of your own home and on top of that you might be lucky enough to get all the hints and playing tips you need because the ***first prize*** is a copy of the game and a video of the ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, plus the British Original Cast Soundtrack album and a Rocky Horror Show T-shirt to wear while watching, listening





or playing.

Second prize is the game, soundtrack album and T-shirt; while the ***third prize*** is the game and T-shirt with ten runners-up each getting a copy of the game.

To enter you'll need to find the listed words in the WORDSQUARE printed here, and complete the tie breaker question, 'Frankie says it isn't easy to have a..........' (Frank n' Furter that is, not the Hollywood-bound mob)!

Entries to read ***THE ROCKY HORROR COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB***, to arrive by first post on April 25th, either on the entry form provided here or on a photocopy if you don't want to damage the magazine.

DON'T DREAM IT. PLAY IT!

ROCKY HORROR ENTRY FORM

Find the following words in the WORDSQUARE and ring them. The words may be upright, horizontal, diagonal or even backwards: **TRANSYLVANIA**

DECADENCE ROCKYHORRORSHOW EDDIE
RICHARDOBRIEN MAGENTA BRAD RIFFRAFF
SUSPENDERS FRANKIE COLUMBIA JANET

E	O	X	T	D	L	V	L	K	K	X	R	O	G	W	C	U
X	C	Q	B	D	A	R	B	U	T	I	C	E	E	R	D	T
L	J	D	B	G	O	O	P	I	C	B	C	W	F	Q	R	S
A	T	N	E	G	A	M	A	H	T	N	O	F	A	A	U	C
U	S	R	U	W	G	H	A	I	E	B	A	R	N	S	I	E
J	K	C	Y	R	U	R	K	D	R	R	D	S	P	I	T	W
W	C	X	T	A	D	F	A	I	F	N	Y	E	F	I	E	G
O	O	D	H	D	L	C	E	F	A	L	N	M	T	I	F	K
S	L	Z	E	X	E	N	I	X	V	D	O	S	K	C	L	L
T	U	F	A	D	D	R	E	A	E	X	E	N	D	J	I	C
S	M	O	T	S	Z	L	N	R	E	V	A	T	J	X	N	O
H	B	Y	R	F	A	I	S	D	S	R	Q	A	S	D	N	X
O	I	H	E	F	A	Y	D	N	F	C	N	B	M	H	J	L
R	A	B	N	S	K	I	A	W	J	E	X	M	Z	T	O	D
R	W	N	D	C	E	R	P	Q	T	X	P	Z	N	X	B	W
O	L	Y	O	E	T	M	G	C	D	N	F	U	Z	W	Z	J
R	D	R	E	R	C	A	N	Q	S	L	W	Q	K	P	S	S

Complete the following phrase:

Frankie says, it isn't easy to have a ....'

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Postcode ____________



THE SINCLAIR STORY part one

Nineteen eighty five is Sir Clive Sinclair's forty fifth year, and sees him personally worth well over £100 million. His name is emblazoned on the covers of over 5,000,000 computers which have been sold all over the world, and he has the majority holding in Sinclair Research, now the top volume microcomputer company in the world. Every other home computer sold in the United Kingdom is a Sinclair. We begin a four-part series which examines the man, the dream and the machines from which millions draw pleasure every day.

'Sinclair' has become a household name worldwide through the ZX80, the first affordable home computer, the ZX81 and of course the ZX Spectrum — without which CRASH and a vast software industry wouldn't have come into being. And Sir Clive himself is now regarded as something of a guru — not just because he can be looked upon as the founding father of home computing in this country, but as a result of his entrepreneurial skills and his dedication to innovation. Sir Clive has described his business as being 'in consumer products that are basically electrical — one per person products'; and the jump from computers to electric vehicles, seen in this light, is not so amazing.

Sir Clive Sinclair is now almost a figure of popular myth and has been referred to as 'Uncle Clive' by the press for nearly a decade. He is to computers and electronic wizardry what Sir Freddie Laker was to air travel — the man who brought seemingly unattainable goods and services within the price range of everyone. Laker's airline crashed spectacularly a few years ago, and out of the public eye, Sir Freddie is almost forgotten. But Sir Clive remains in a strong commercial position although his image as a white entrepreneurial knight has been tarnished on occasions. He may want to forget such fiascos as the late delivery of QLs, which led him to being pilloried by journalists in the computer press; or earlier, the serious financial problems caused by his Black Watch project in the mid-seventies which resulted in losses of over £350,000 and led to him looking for outside funding to continue with his pocket TV project. But so far, he has always managed to have the last laugh, never so much so than at the expense of his 'arch-rival' and ex-colleague in calculator designing days, Chris Curry. Curry, who founded Acorn and secured the contract to make the BBC computer, recently referred to allegations of extraordinarily high rates of return on Spectrums, which led to a dust-up in a London wine bar where the two tycoons slugged it out with rolled newspapers. But just after Christmas Curry found himself at the helm of a sinking ship.

'I'm not interested in business just for the sake of making a product, any product,' said Sinclair during an interview in 1982. 'The only point is to make something that people like and want, and which is therefore successful. The excitement is the response of the people.'

INTO RADIONICS

From the earliest days, Clive Sinclair has done business through mail order and from the start he offered an unconditional money-back guarantee to his customers — before it became a legal requirement. Sinclair products are generally made using sub-contractors, freeing the core of talent behind the Sinclair organisation to dream up new products and designs, but it also means that quality control has taken a while to stabilise at the outset of each product. Nevertheless, the Sinclair name has attracted a large following of guinea pigs, eager to be the first to own the latest piece of hardware first, even if it does mean putting up with a few teething problems.

In less than thirty years Clive Sinclair has progressed from school-leaver with few formal qualifications to multi-millionaire, electronics tycoon. How did he do it?

While he was still at school, in London, he became interested in mathematics, still his first love, and physics. At that time the electronics industry was beginning to make semiconductors available to the public and he became involved in electronics at a time when new developments were being made in the field almost daily. At school he tinkered with radios while his chums just listened to them. He began writing articles on the subject, and when he was 17 Clive Sinclair decided that a university course in electronics could not teach him the sort of things he wanted to know at the rate he wanted to learn.

In 1957, deciding that he would rather start a business than continue his formal education, the young school-leaver became a technical journalist, working for Barnes Publications for whom he wrote a series of small books for the hobbyist — learning far more in the process of writing them than any of his readers could hope to gain from reading them.

He began his commercial career by selling transistors which he bought from Plessey, who had rejected them because the didn't meet exacting specifications. He tested these rejected components and re-sold the satisfactory ones by mail order from his room in Islington — apparently there came a time when his landlady and he parted company. She didn't mind letting a room to a journalist, but as business premises. . . .

The he found financial backing to start making pocket radios to his own design, and left BarnesHis backer lost heart, pulling out, and for a while he worked as a freelance technical journalist trying to raise the money to launch his idea as products. After some months, with resources depleted, he sought a full-time employment once more, and was snapped up by United Trade Press as Assistant Editor of *Electronic Components*. His knowledge and understanding of electronics had a marked effect on the magazine's circulation and advertising revenue.

From the start Clive Sinclair's colleagues had been impressed by his incredible calm maturity, and he was liked and respected enormously. He worked on his aim of selling mail order radios in his spare time, and when he gave in his notice, announcing that he was going off to start a business, United Trade Press was very sorry to be losing him. So they came to an arrangement by which he was allowed the use of a vacant office on the third floor of the building without charge in return for further articles for the magazine. For a few months this arrangement helped Clive Sinclair find his feet in the mail order market, supplying radio kits, but then the office became too small for the head of the rapidly growing Sinclair Radionics, and Clive Sinclair ceased to be a journalist and became a full time businessman. 'The Slimline' was Sinclair's first radio kit but he rapidly followed it up with a tiny amplifier module.





The business, founded on mail order, expanded and began to take on staff. Sinclair advertisements have maintained a continuous presence since 1962, when the radio kits were launched, and at the time were innovative in themselves. 'The first advertisement that I ever took was much bigger than the usual advertisement in that sort hobbies magazine. I didn't have the money to pay for it even, but I did it on the grounds that it would breed confidence. Nobody had ever taken a half page before, and it worked.'

In the beginning products were designed by Clive Sinclair himself. The range included an amplifier which has become known as 'the biscuit tin amplifier'. The X10 and X20 tended to radiate which was a bit of a problem unless they were shielded — and a biscuit tin was ideal for the purpose.

CAMBRIDGE AND CALCULATORS

In 1967 the growing Sinclair business empire moved to Cambridge, where it has been ever since, shortly after producing the Z-12, a tiny hi-fi amplifier and pre-amp. Soon a turnover of £100,000 had been achieved — no mean feat in five years, largely funded on the electronics hobbyist market.

Sinclair was also active in the electronics instrument field, launching the DM2 multimeter in the early seventies and becoming the largest manufacturer of digital multimeters in Europe in little more than five years.

He broke away from the hobbyist and hi-fi market in 1972 with the launch of a single chip calculator which was born after six months research, and was pocket-sized as opposed to hand held. Using the same PMOS chip as the American hand held calculator, which required large batteries owing to the heavy demand the PMOS chip made on its power supply, Sinclair found a way of cutting the power consumption by about 20 times. This meant that a truly hand held calculator was possible; Sinclair Radionics made it and started the calculator boom with 'The Executive', earning £2.5 million in export revenue alone. At the time, Sinclair had a staff of about 60. By 1977 Sinclair had become world famous as a calculator manufacturer, and the 'Cambridge' programmable outsold all programmable and scientific calculators.



The Sinclair philosophy of sub-contracting the actual production of his wares, buying in the components and paying sub-contractors to assemble them, contributed greatly to his success. He was left free to concentrate on research and development, and he was able to recruit a talented team of 'inventors' — including Chris Curry (latterly of Acorn fame) who has been held responsible for interesting Sinclair in calculators and computers.

But the launch of his Black Watch in 1975 resulted in a disaster. The watch used a new type of chip — integrated injection logic — which ran on low power but was capable of switching the high power required to drive the display. Sinclair spotted that this type of chip, invented by IBM and Phillips, was ideal for watches — and devised the circuitry required to incorporate it. He produced the first production integrated injection logic chip in the world — ahead of its inventors — but the watch project ran into problems at his chip suppliers who weren't able to deliver the goods. Eventually Black Watches were made in a version which used CMOS chips, but by then Sinclair could no longer hold the price in what was a highly competitive watch market. A loss of some £355,000 was sustained in 1976.

Having previously funded research and expansion from his own profits, Sinclair was faced with scrapping many years work on a pocket TV project. He approached the National Enterprise Board for cash, and sold 43% of the shares in the company. The NRDC put up £700,000 for development to continue on the pocket TV. By 1977 Sinclair had moved entirely out of the hi-fi market, continuing with digital meters and calculators; and the pocket TV with a 2-inch picture tube (you had to have a fairly large pocket!) was launched, achieving major sales in the United States. 40% of Sinclair's turnover was attributable to TVs, 40% to calculators and 20% to meters. In 1978 the 'Microvision' was marketed in Europe, and in Britain — where it had been sold initially for £220 plus VAT — the price was halved.

THE FUTURE TODAY

Early in 1978 the first Sinclair computer came on the market — very much the forerunner of the ZX80 with its membrane keyboard. Costing £40 it had 256 bytes of RAM, a half K of ROM which held a monitor, and didn't have a box! Powered by a 6v lantern battery, it was a true computer, not an upgraded calculator, and was advertised as being 'less than half the price of any keyboard addressable microcomputer'.

The MK14, for such it was, had a very early 8 bit processor, the SCMP or 'SCAMP', which was programmed in machine code — although a very tiny BASIC soon became available. And the manual included a program for 'Lunar Lander' — the very first game playable on a Sinclair computer!

In 1979 Sinclair and the NEB parted company. They wanted to concentrate on meters while Clive Sinclair was attached to the TV project. Left to his own devices again, Sinclair founded Sinclair Research, the company which became responsible for the low-cost home computer. Next month: from the ZX80 via microdrives and interfaces to the ZX Spectrum and the QL.

SIEVING THROUGH THE BIZ

THE BUNDERBLUSS FILE: We sent our intrepid interviewer Leslie B. Bunder into the depths of Virgin's HQ. Shooting straight from the hip, he sent us this Chris Sievey interview typed on orange paper...

Chris Sievey has been involved as a performer and musician within 'the business' for nearly a decade starting, out during the heyday of Punk in the mid seventies. These years of constant involvement with the music industry prompted Chris to devise a board game based on his experiences in the vein of Monopoly — something everyone could join in with and enjoy. The idea of the board game based on the music business came to him when he was a youngster, 'I used to play my game with pen and paper with friends of mine and they told me it would be a great idea for a board game,' Chris told me when I met up with him at Virgin's HQ in London's Portobello Road. He continued, 'So ever since those days it's been an ambition of mine to devise a game about the music business.'

It was fine thinking up the basic idea, but to sit down and actually devise the game was another. Games designing takes months of work and at the time Chris and his band The Freshies were busy writing, rehearsing, record ing and playing concerts — so plans for the game were shelved for a while. 'Trying to get into the Top 40 was much more important,' Chris said. And they were rewarded for this hard work as *I'm in love with the girl on the Virgin Manchester megastore checkout desk* and *I can't get bouncing babies by the teardrop explodes* both managed to get in the Top 40 and are today hailed as classic singles. So just like any other successful act The Freshies were enjoying their fame. It was a case of Top of the Pops one day, off to Paris another and back to London the following day. But unfortunately for the band, difficulties were encountered with their record company which resulted in Chris resting The Freshies for a while. He concentrated on his solo career, and decided to look for another deal.

During this period between deals Chris decided he wanted something to occupy his mind and, so the game idea he had shelved was dusted off and rethought. Early in 1982 he saw the first seeds of the computer industry being planted; the ZX81 had been firmly established as the first low cost home computer. 'That's when I decided to make *The Biz* into a computer game and not a board game.' he said. 'I saw the potential of these machines and said to myself 'I must get one — so I did.' After a few months of playing around with the ZX81 to get acquainted with it, Chris set about writing *The Biz*. First he wrote a game called *The Flying Train* which was on the B side of his *Camouflage* single released by EMI records — the first rock single to have a computer game on the B side.

Chris pointed out that *The Flying Train* was the first budget game! 'The single only cost a pound and included the game while computer games at that time were £5 and up.'

With *The Flying Train* behind him Chris set about writing *The Biz*. Having gained considerable knowledge through programming his first game, writing *The Biz* was a comparatively easy task. He encountered a major problem however, which lay not in programming, but in the ZX81 and its minimal memory. 'I even had a 16K Ram Pack but that wasn't good enough as I kept on running out of memory. There was so much information and detail I wanted to put in, that I had to look around for a machine with a larger memory.'

Luckily for Chris and his plans for *The Biz* the 48K Spectrum came out: 'They've both got similar BASICs so converting programs isn't that difficult. The Spectrum had enough memory and it was encouraging to see that there was a huge market for Spectrum programs. A friend of mine had a Spectrum, and I asked if I could borrow it as I was anxious to complete *The Biz* properly. He agreed so I took it home with me. At the start it took me a bit of time to get used to, but within a couple of weeks I had started programming *The Biz* and at long last it was beginning to take shape.'

Eighteen months passed before the final version hit the shops. Why did it take so long?

'Firstly, I wanted to make the program as challenging and interesting as I could which meant I was adding new bits of information to the program all the time. Also I was still busy with music, playing small concerts here and there; and finally I had to sort out the legal rights to the music tracks which are recorded on the game tape. All the tracks were released on various different labels so that took time.'

How important are the singles included with the *The Biz*?

'The music side is very important to me; the computer games are done just for a bit of fun and for a change. The tracks that come with the game are not just old records, they're special recordings and remixes I did to go with the game. I've just spent some time recording tracks for my next game.'

'Next game?' I asked.

'Yeah, I've written another 3 machine code games and Virgin have got another eight music tracks of mine.'

'Why did you sign to Virgin?'

'Probably because everyone else would have turned the game down!! Only joking, it's because of my involvement in the music business and because I know Virgin as a record company and how they operate. Virgin know how to market music as well as computer games, whereas if I signed to a games company they wouldn't know how to market the music. Virgin know how to market both at the same time and do a good job.'

I asked Chris what his music contemporaries think of *The Biz*.

'They all say "Oh No, not Sievey again!! What is he up to now?" People I know who have played it have found it quite realistic — my road manager said if you do this, that will happen, and it did.



CHRIS SIEVEY BEING INTERVIEWED BY FRANK SIDEBOTTOM.

Most people who've played have enjoyed it.'

'Why did you include the music on the cassette with the game?'

'To make it a complete package, and good value for money. You've got a game, some music and an exclusive interview with me. I think games costing £5 or so are far too expensive — these new budget games are a great idea.'

'Do you play many games?'

'Not really, I've got Space Invaders and the like which my children love to play, but about the only game I play is *Football Manager*. I enjoy watching the highlights of the match, it's such an addictive game. Oh yes, (laughing) I love all the Virgin Games!!'

'Any tips for CRASH readers on how to succeed in the music business?'

'If I knew that, I wouldn't still be trying to get to number one. Would you believe that even though I know how the program works I can't even get into the top 10.'

As the last drops of coffee were being drunk I asked Chris how he would feel if *The Biz* was sold as a bootleg (pirate copy).

'It would only add to the cult thing, it wouldn't bother me that much. I suppose I would think 'I'm losing money here' but at the same time there's the satisfaction gained from knowing that people are playing the game, and they should want a copy, if they like it.'

MORE...

Crash Competition

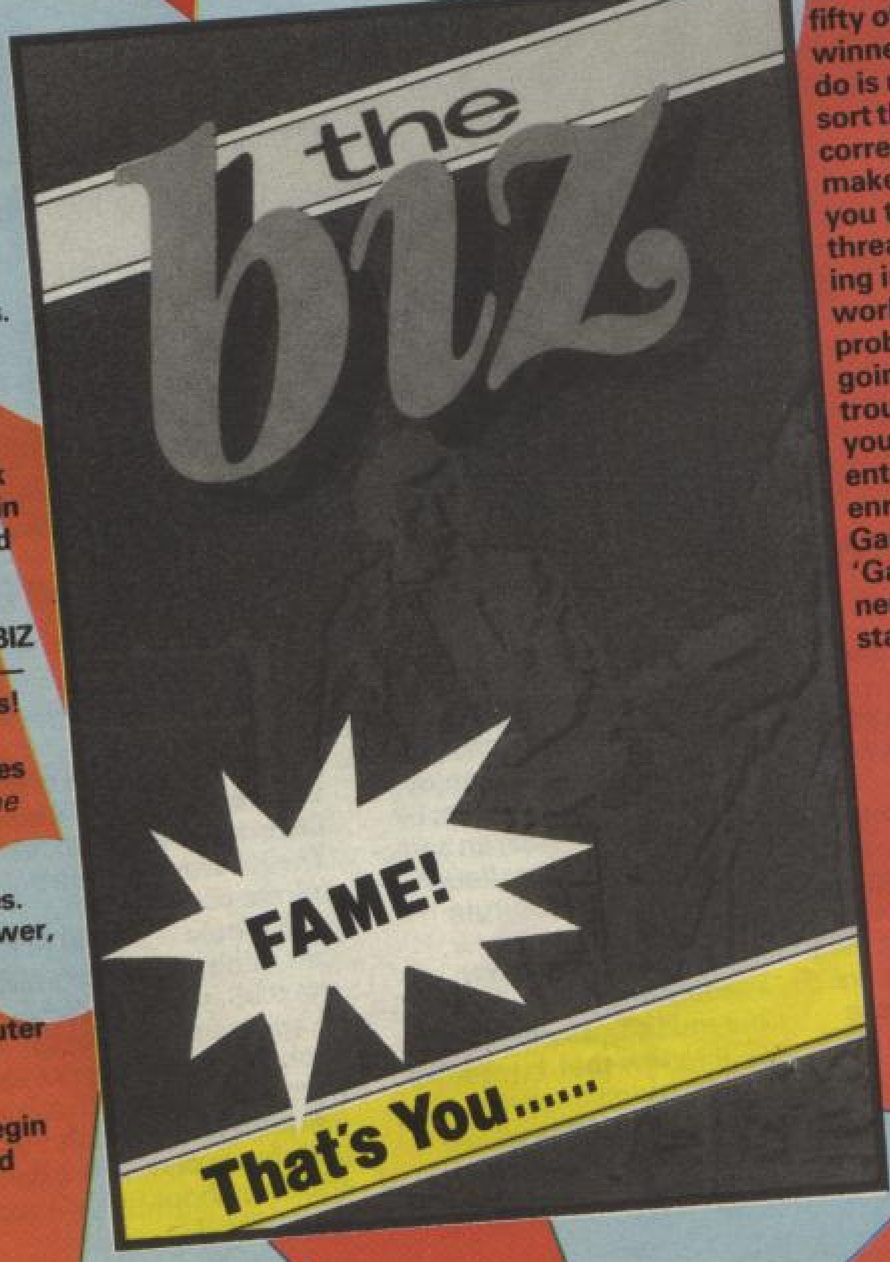
A CHANCE TO BECOME A SUPER STAR — FOR A DAY!

Enter this Virgin Competition and you could possibly be the one to end up on stage with CHRIS SIEVEY!!

After long and protracted negotiations with Mr Sievey's software and music publishers, Virgin, CRASH is now in a position to offer fifty copies of THE BIZ as prizes in a competition. Well, not THAT long or THAT protracted really, but it's not easy fixing up all these competitions for you lot out there. If it wasn't for nice people like Nick and Patricia at VIRGIN my job would be hell, you know. Sometimes I feel becoming a software superstar would be a whole lot simpler. But I don't suppose you're the least bit interested in ME, all you want to know is how to enter the competition and stand a chance of winning the top prize — a live appearance on stage with CHRIS SIEVEY and his band THE FRESHIES. Ungrateful tykes. Well here you are then, and the best of luck.

Reading through this issue of CRASH and looking back over our review of THE BIZ in the March issue you should be able to answer the following questions without borrowing a copy of THE BIZ to read the cassette inlay — but you might find it helps!

1. List three of the qualities you need to make it in *The Biz*.
2. Give three ways of improving these qualities.
3. What is Chris' interviewer, Mr Sidebotham's, first name?
4. Name another computer game Chris Sievey has written.
5. Where did CRASH begin its assault on the record charts?

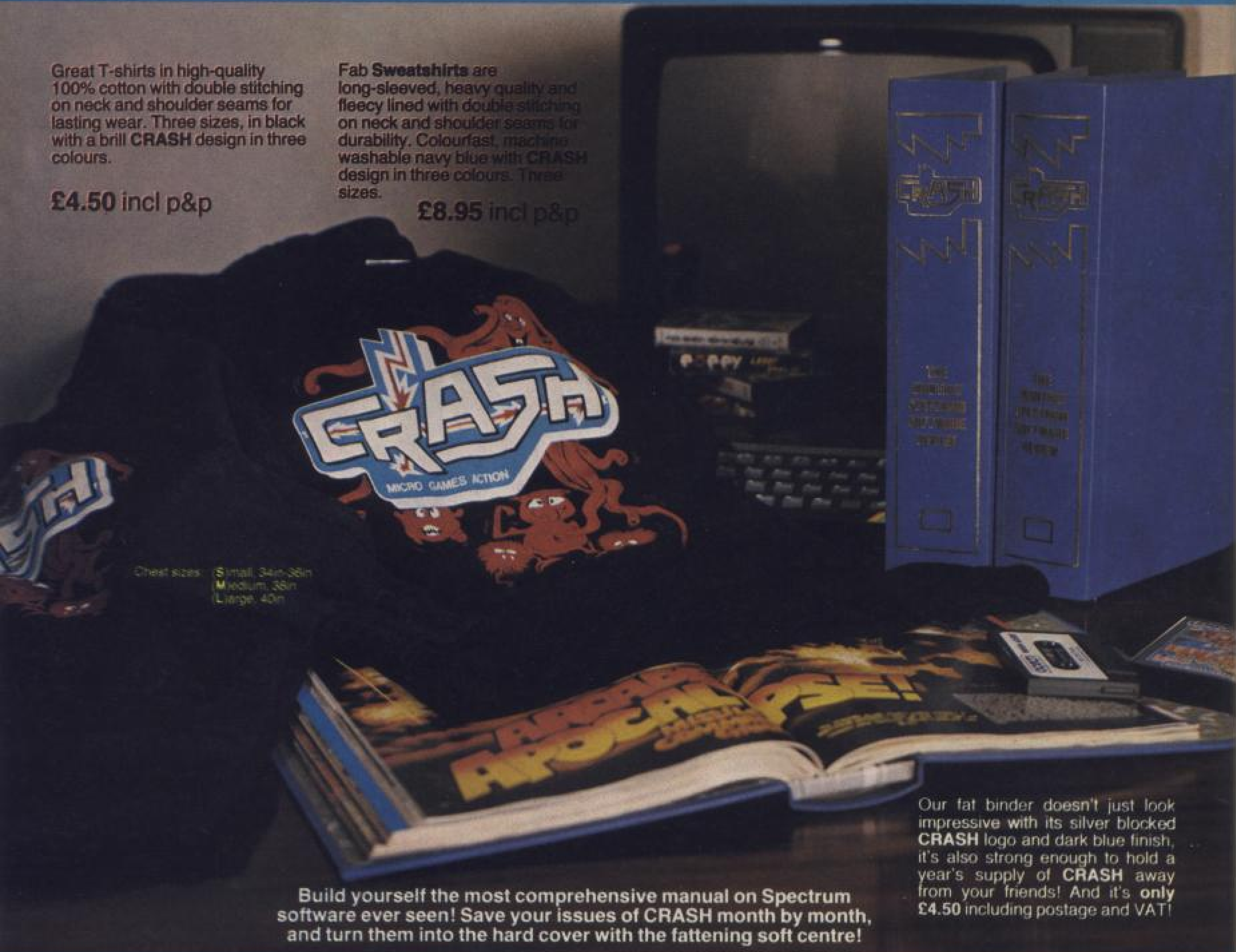


Answers on the back of a sealed envelope or on a postcard, with your name and address, to the usual competition address. First correct answer out of the bag wins the chance to appear live on stage with Chris — and probably their photo spread all over the pages of CRASH, NME and the Katmandu Observer, for doing so; five second prize winners pick up a collection of Chris Sievey and The Freshies souvenirs and then there's the 50 copies of the game itself to give away — which includes an exclusive interview with Chris and eight of his singles, which normally sells at £6.95.

So there you are, another fifty of you lined up as winners, and all that's left to do is receive all your entries, sort through them to find the correct answers and then make the draw. I just hope you think of me in my threadbare jumper, shivering in the office, while you work out the answers. You probably won't — and are going to forget about my troubles the moment I tell you that everyone who enters, win or lose, will be enrolled in the Virgin Games Gang. Pass that copy of 'Games writing for beginners', Leroy, it's time I got started.

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As Lloyd Mangram mentioned in his letters page, he's been told to get it together (we've generously provided him with a second tiny desk) and organise an Index for the 12 issues your binder will hold. The index is absolutely FREE to anyone who orders the binder and will be sent automatically in January.

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Adventure guru Scott Adams with a couple of friends.

GREAT SCOTT!

GRAEME KIDD talks to Adventure guru SCOTT ADAMS

Adventure programs, first written on company-owned mainframes, are nearly a quarter of a century old. Originally written in the sixties for the amusement of the computer wizards who ran commercial data processing installations, adventures such as *Colossal Caves* and *Adventure* were run late at night, when all was quiet and the operators wanted something to amuse themselves with. These programs occupied megabytes of storage memory, offered no graphics and could only be played by computer staff when time on the system could be spared.

Scott Adams — who lightheartedly describes himself as a 'grandfather' in the microcomputer industry (he is, after all in his thirties) — is regarded as one of the founding fathers of micro adventuring. Scott Adams wrote the first adventure for a micro, and founded Adventure International: the oldest company selling adventure programs retail. Around half a million Scott Adams programs have been sold to date worldwide and he is currently working on a series of adventures based on Marvel's comic characters. *Hulk* and *Spiderman*, his two latest adventures for the Spectrum, are the first two in the Questprobe series, which will expand at the rate of 3 or 4 programs a year and run to over a dozen titles. Both have been CRASH Smashes, and so when we heard that The Man was in the country, we had to go for an interview.

Scott Adams started programming in the late sixties at High School in America. 'In those days there was no such thing as a micro, and you were lucky to see a mainframe terminal', he explains. 'Our school, as an experiment got a mainframe terminal for students' use and it became my terminal. I was one of the original hackers.'

This early interest in computing developed into a profession after taking a degree course in System programming, and soon Mr Adams was captivated by *Colossal Caves* and *Adventure*.

'I saw the games on a mainframe, and I was fascinated. I owned a Tandy Model I and thought 'let's see if I can write an Adventure type game on the TRS80'. I didn't listen to the people who said it would be impossible to get a program which existed on megabytes of storage into a 16K machine.

'I didn't try and take the existing program and put it into 16K, but sat down and wrote an adventure language of my own for the machine — an interpreter — and proceded from there to write an adventure in that language. As a system programmer I know how to write tools. The first tool was the adventure language, the second was the interpreter to understand language and the third tool allowed me to develop a database for the interpreter to understand.

'I wrote four or five different systems first, not an adventure. That was my original adventure-writing language which has been the basis of my programs until recently. We've now developed **SAGA plus**, which stands for Scott Adams Graphics Adventures Plus. It's a full sentence and graphics interpreter designed to run on machines as small as 48K or as large as 400 megabytes. SAGA is an open ended language which is designed to take advantage of new machines as they come out — we are ready for the next two or three generations of machines.'

Which rather prompted the question as to how Scott Adams saw adventures developing as hardware becomes cheaper and more sophisticated: 'Adventures will themselves get even more complex and sophisticated. For instance, the next adventure in the Questprobe series, *Fantastic Four Part I* will be a two player adventure — either two people can play, or one person can play, playing both roles. I can see down the road to a time when fifty players will be playing one adventure.'

The Fantastic Four Parts I and *II* will be the fourth and fifth adventures in the Questprobe series, with Part I introducing the Torch and The Thing (a Hulk type character) and Part II bringing on the other two characters. Both adventures will be written entirely in SAGA Plus and Scott Adams is confident that the Spectrum versions will have all the features of the disc-based programs written for the larger micros, such as the Apple. *Hulk* was written in his original adventure interpreter, while *Spiderman* was written in the original language and upgraded using some SAGA Plus features for tape-based micros. Expect to see *Fantastic Four Part I* around June this year.

How do *Hulk* and *Spiderman* fit in to the scheme of his adventure? 'I wrote *Hulk* as a beginner's adventure deliberately. I put a lot in there aimed at people who had not played adventures before. Because of that I lost some of the complexity that I would have like to have had — which I was able to put back with *Spiderman*. I would have liked to have written *Hulk* to be for the experienced Adventurer, or medium experienced, but it wasn't fair . . . a lot of people would have been buying *Hulk* who had never bought an adventure before, because they like Hulk as Hulk.

'What I had to do was put enough stuff in *Hulk* so that an experienced adventurer couldn't sit down, play it for half an hour and be done, but also enough breadth so that a complete adventuring novice could sit down and play it without getting hopelessly frustrated.

'*Spiderman* I felt, as the second one out, gave me more leeway, and I was able to make a more complex adventure without as much handholding as I did on *Hulk*.'

The 'arcade adventure' concept is catching on fast, with a number of software houses bringing out arcade action adventure games, including the Wally series from Mikro-Gen and the soon-to-be-launched *Chuckie Egg II*. How does the founding father of micro adventuring view this development? 'They're Twitch Games', he grinned, 'arcade games. An adventure game is one where you use your mind; if you can type, you can play an adventure. If you require anything other than that, you've got a twitch game — an arcade game — where your skill of movement is more important than your thinking. Adventure International sells lots of Twitch games, but we don't call them adventures. These arcade adventures are getting more sophisticated — but they're still arcade games. People who love adventures won't play an arcade action game, it's not the same. But for somebody who likes both, they're a nice meeting . . . a nice melting.'

"I didn't listen to people who said it would be impossible to get a program which existed on megabytes of storage into a 16K machine."

Does this mean that you are an adventure purist — will you play shoot 'em ups? 'Some of my favourite games are a mixture of the two, *Wizardry* for instance, is a mixture of the two which I find extremely fascinating. There you have arcade type battle scenes but there's no joystick, no real-time action, you just use words to interact. As soon as you put a joystick in, where reflexes are important, you no longer have an adventure game.'

What about graphics — the original adventures were text-only, and some adventurers feel that graphics detract from the game, and indeed take up valuable memory which could be better used; others feel that graphics add a great deal to their enjoyment of adventures. 'I'm on both sides. I write all my adventures as text-only, to be played as text-only. As I'm writing an adventure I say 'It'd be nice if we had graphics here to give a special effect', and I put hooks on the game.

'Then graphics are added on for those machines that will support them; one thing I insist on is that all my versions support the Graphics OFF switch for people who don't want the pictures. My adventures can all be played text-only because you don't lose anything...there are no hints or clues in the picture which do not appear in the text. The graphics are purely illustrations, that's all they're designed to be.

'I like playing graphic adventures myself, but I think a good text adventure doesn't need graphics — but they're nice to have. Think of the difference between comic books and novels: in a comic book, the pictures are an intrinsic part of the text. My adventures are not comic books — I'm writing illustrated novels if you like. The pictures are nice, and they help break up the monotony but you can clip them out and not lose a thing.'

A large number of commercially produced adventure programs are now being written using utilities such as *The Quill*. What do you think about such utilities? 'Well, I've not sat down and looked at *The Quill*, but in general I've seen a number of these packages and it's clear that it's hard to make an adventure writing system that allows the average person to take off and write an adventure, because by definition a good adventure has to be fairly well packed into the machine. To pack code that well you have to have intimate knowledge of what you're doing. They do give people a taste of what it is like to write an adventure though.'

So how do you set out to write an adventure?

'The first thing I decide is 'what's the theme' — obviously with the Marvel adventures that's fairly simple; then I decide whether I want a treasure hunt or a mission. If it's a mission — what is my mission? If it's a treasure hunt then it's usually easier to write, you don't have to be as serial in what you're doing. Then I start putting in locations and start thinking of the problems that I'd like the player to overcome and some of the ways I'd like to see him solve it.

'Some of the more wicked things I've done is put in a problem that might have seven or eight different solutions, but when you get to the end only one solution was allowed. It's a matter of balancing. *Sorcerer of Claymore Castle* was unique in that respect. You're casting spells and you can use spells for a lot of different things — for example one spell might open any door; the trick is to find the right door to open with it.

'Another thing an adventure should have is the ability to give the player some sort of clue so that technically, if the player is clever enough to figure it out, it's possible to play an adventure without dying or losing points from the very beginning to the end. If you're really clever enough, all the clues should be there from the start — that's hard to write. To my mind, that makes a better adventure. In other words it's not a case of 'if he opens that door a brick's going to fall on his head and kill him' — that would be unfair of me. There should be a way of letting the player know ahead of time, of giving him a chance — there might be a glass panel above the door for instance, and if he's smart enough to look first through the panel, then he'll see the brick up there. If he just goes charging in and gets killed, well that's his fault!'

Is it really a game between you and the adventurer? 'I'm trying to give the player all the clues he needs to solve the problems, but I'm also trying to do it in such a way that I going to — *not* confuse him, but send him off on the wrong path *deliberately*, and give him a red herring. I want to put the correct clues there, but I want to make it interesting enough so that the player doesn't solve it the right way the first time.'

So what does the man who has turned from a self confessed computer junky into, arguably, the world's leading adventure writer, do to relax? 'I keep salt water fish — from octopus to trigger fish, and I have seven or eight tanks in my home in Florida. It takes a great deal of care to keep salt water fish alive and prospering. It's the first hobby I've had for ten years that has nothing to do with computers. It started when I walked into a salt water fish shop and just seeing it all there. They had a great tank of invertebrae and there was an octopus in there — I was just fascinated. So I started looking at what it takes to keep an octopus alive. So far I've done very well — my original octopus is still thriving. I find it profoundly relaxing — the animals themselves are just gorgeous. In the beginning I just sat for hours looking at the tank with the water bubbling.'

How do his wife and children cope with him spending hours glued to a computer, writing adventures? 'My wife is the Corporate Vice President of the company, and she handles most of the business — she enjoys the fish too so we have close interests and it all works out very nicely. I have two daughters and a son, the eldest is six so they're not ready for my adventures yet, but my eldest daughter plays alphabet games on the computer already, so I have hopes. . . .

And there we had to leave it. Mr Adams had promised to do some shopping in Birmingham city centre that afternoon, and as a good father couldn't let his daughter down.





DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail

WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS

In February a Green paper, a discussion document, went before Parliament which proposes the levy of 10p on an audio tape and 25p on a video tape. The reasons behind this unwelcome addition to personal finances lie in the estimated 65 million LPs lost every year to the illegal taping of music and startling statistics which suggest that up to 90% of blank tapes are used for reproducing copyright material.

Could I take this opportunity to put a voice to what many must think of this bill, that it is ill-concieved and insensitive. The loss of LP sales is a very difficult commodity to quantify as the figure assumes that a fair proportion of those who tape LPs would have been prepared to buy a good number of their taped collection. My own experience, and that of many of my acquaintances, does not bear this judgement out. Before looking at the bill's effects on computing let us first analyse another vested interest which has called for the levy.

Video cassettes are used to tape TV programmes more conveniently viewed at a later time. It is hard to visualise exactly where the TV companies are losing out. The idea that taping reduces the life span of a TV programme as it reduces the number of occasions on which it can sensibly be repeated is not borne out by the facts which relate an increase in the number of repeats since the meteoric rise in video recorder sales. It is true that three years ago, say, all blank tapes could be used for were dictating machines or copying but now a significant number are used in the home computer sector, for example, in the legitimate acts of saving adventure games or, for that matter, programming itself (the pile of blank cassettes which build up developing a complex game can grow incredibly high).

So the question is, how is the money raised by the levy to be split between the music and computer industries and if the Government seriously intended to include the computer industry why are discs and microdrives not included in the bill? If money is to be appropriated to the computer industry how will distribution be achieved amongst all the companies vying for a share of the proceeds when some are reticent over sales figures and other distort figures up to a factor of ten?

It would seem this bill could end up as a direct tax on adventuring with the levy (which amounts to a fine) being added to the amount already allocated in the price of adventure games to offset the proportion lost to illegal copying. The bill is an insult to all those who have never made an illegal copy of a computer game. A law which assumes everyone to be a criminal and punishing everyone as such will set a bad precedent and is the equivalent of imposing a levy of 20p on a gallon of petrol to combat speeding.

By imposing this levy the Government would be virtually legalising the copying of copyright material and instill a feeling that has it that, since the levy has been paid then it must now be all right to copy. In short, if you've paid the fine you might as well commit the crime.

THE HOLLOW

Producer: **Gilsoft**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **Quill**
Author: **T Davies**

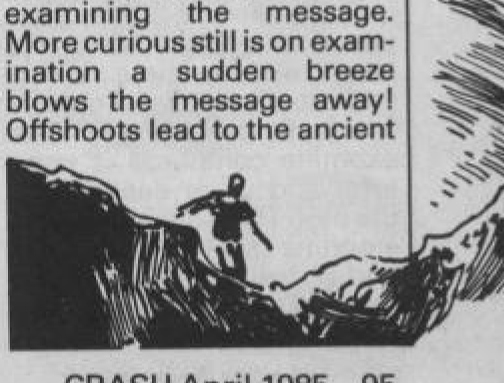
If you are impressed by official endorsements then perhaps you might like to take a look at this latest Quilled game which is marketed by non-other than the originators of the adventure aid themselves — Gilsoft. It's not long after loading that you see why Gilsoft had a high regard for this particular attempt: the presentation is very distinctive with good use of all the Spectrum colours and using flash to distinguish those objects which may offer the most assistance. The location descriptions are long, detailed and full of atmosphere and interest and, at a time when adventures increasingly appear more awkward and demanding, this one merrily flows along.

Walking along a cliff-top path back to your holiday hotel you wonder at the length of a so-called shortcut from the beach. As you enter a hollow the hot summer breeze turns cool and as you clamber out things have changed around you so markedly, well, you must have chanced upon a time warp and an adventure quest (hence the title).

You are transported long ago to the time of wizards and magicians following a war between an uncaring Lord of the Lands and its people. The Magician the people turned to was no better than the Lord, casting a spell over the land imprisoning all light and darkness within a perfectly round stone. Splitting the stone into two, the Magician placed the Darkness into the larger fragment and the Light into the smaller. Finding where each lies and joining them would break the spell. Not only must you find these two parts of the stone but also the seven fragments of a magical medallion hidden in the mysterious land of Moylan, to be joined with the 3 fragments given you at the very start. Then you can enter the Wizard's Tower and free the land of Moylan from the Wizard's spell and so return to your own time.

There are two aspects of this game which are unusual, but pleasantly so. You meet the first very quickly from the start whereby you pick up the three fragments of the Moylan Medallion automatically on visiting the location and this sort of automatic action occurs in one or two other locations further into the adventure. This I feel is a good point as it saves typing time involved with the obvious and it gives the game a racy feel. The other surprise is the length of the descriptions resulting from the examine command whose power is enhanced throughout leading to all sorts of sudden and unexpected happenings. (As a let down from the continual stream of happenings EXAM DOG brings about a delightful non-event).

Heading south from the hollow you enter a woodland to the east side of which is a well and a message. Curiously, perhaps due to a shortcoming in *The Quill* itself, you cannot read the message and the program is left to direct your efforts towards examining the message. More curious still is on examination a sudden breeze blows the message away! Offshoots lead to the ancient







AFGHAN ATTACK

Producer: **Southern Software**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **Quill**
Authors: **Mark Phillips and Andrew Graham**

Afghan Attack is a reasonably topical adventure offering something a little different with special features including communicating aliens, control over their activities and real-time simulation.

The title does not refer to an altercation with man's best friend on Hampstead Heath but to that more distant turmoil, the stomping ground of ITN film crews who remind us every other day what might happen to us were we ever foolish enough to construct the channel tunnel. The funny thing is, if things get any worse in our once homely islands the Russians wouldn't even be interested — although all those Japanese video recorders might prove useful for videotaping Russian parades.

Anyhow, back to Afghanistan which is slipping down the news charts (it now follows Princess Di's hairdo) after briefly hitting number one when the Ruskies decided to stretch their legs a little and stroll around Asia.

The game is set deep within trouble torn Afghanistan where the invading Soviet army is in a desperate battle with the stubborn Afghan rebels. We are told on loading 'this adventure is purely for entertainment. The plot is based on total fiction and holds no political or educational bearing whatsoever.' This is the stuff — pure gobbledegookski and antipropadarnosk — you'll leave this program as precisely ill-informed as when you entered it — super! Not quite though, the instructions which load separately before the game must be some of the longest on record, and in the style boring radio stations have made their own, one screen is devoted to dedications including one Bilbo and a Longfellow.

A request has been put to western governments by the Pakistani leaders seeking intervention due to the increasing numbers of Soviet troops massing on their NW border with Afghanistan. The western leaders meet in Paris to discuss the crisis and after intense negotiations send a crack force of highly trained men to head-off Soviet movement on the eastern road out of Kabul. You, the Commander will lead fifty British Paratroopers (including ten under your direct command) and five Officers. The adventure consists of two parts where part two begins north of the camp in part one, and on request Southern can supply a clue cheat, a list of objects and a complete list of the vocabulary.

Vocabulary is verb/noun but with some notable exceptions. Communications can become quite involved with constructions such as SERGEANT GRANT OPEN FIRE and LIEUTENANT TRAVIS ATTACK HELICOPTER or even CORPORAL MARSH FIRE BLOWPIPE. DISTRIBUTE and DEPLOY are further refinements to the active battlefield scenario where DEPLOY allows you to detail your men wherever feasible.

Instructions before programs are tolerable unless, as in this case, they are overlong. In fact you must load up part one of the game once you've loaded up the instructions. This means it is not easy to look up an aspect you may have forgotten and, of course, necessarily increases loading time. Instructions, really, are for covers with perhaps some salient points precised into the program. Here we have verbose volumes within the program in a throw back to 1983, a la *Timegate*. The program claims a friendly vocabulary but is about as friendly as a Russian entrepreneur denied his full quota of blue jeans. LEAVE or GET OUT would seem too straightforward and you can only disembark the helicopter by resorting to JUMP OUT (still, could be worse, how about DISEMBARK!) and why is it seemingly impossible to get back into the helicopter. Unfriendly moments can be lightened with prompts to coax the player into the right area eg TRY TO REMOVE COVERS or something to that effect but this program provides no such assistance.

It would seem Quilled adventures share this vocabulary problem to a large extent where, compared to programs written without the aid, they do not offer as many verb/noun alternatives for one action. Often a Quilled game will allow only the one verb/noun combination for any one action. Hence the helicopter problem here.

Afghan Attack offers a very different challenge to the norm and appears well-written with a good text. The atmosphere is built up consistently with M16 machine guns and ammunitions, bayonets and grenades, and this is cemented by the feeling of power from your control of a large body of men and their officers. If you grow tired of the traditional adventure and can overlook an obstinate vocabulary then this program is well worth the (rather considerable) effort required to unravel what is a very complicated plot. PS Isn't it funny how at school you do a soppy language like French when Russian is what you're after? Now pass that 'Get by in Russian' book here and let me look up 'No missiles here - we're a nuclear free zone'.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: quite difficult due to wording
Graphics: none
Presentation: good
Input facility: very fast
General rating: quite good but possibly a bit expensive, especially for a Quilled game

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	5
Logic	7
Debugging	10
Overall value	6





town of Moylan, and a location described thus, 'Every wall in this dingy room is covered by shelves. Bottles containing differently coloured liquids sit on the shelves and on the floor beside a stained work bench'. There are also some bars of gold just waiting to be picked up.

The Hollow is a very fast-paced adventure with the fast response time taking you rapidly to useful objects which flash invitingly. The examine command is powerful and leads deeper into the plot. The instructions and storyline are full, coherent and imaginative. One of the better Quilled games from the plethora of look-alikes.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: quite easy
Graphics: none
Presentation: very good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: instantaneous
General rating: good imaginative adventure

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	8
Logic	8
Debugging	10
Overall value	8

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VILLAGE UNDERWORLD

Producer: **Orpheus**
Retail Price: **£**
Language: **Quill**
Author: **Keith A Parrock**

The Village Underworld is another Quilled game that offers something special, not in any new or radical feature, but rather in one of the few departments of innovation left to the Quilled game, that is, the storyline. Not only is the story good but it is told over a large 150 locations. The vocabulary listed on the cover is a good start for what turns out to be a rather enjoyable game.

You are sitting at home one day reading the newspaper when a headline catches your eye: 'Great Find of Treasure at Sleepy Village'. Reading down the column you find several items of great value have been discovered at the village whose name is strangely unfamiliar. The next evening you drive there and stop outside the village hall. It is here you start your adventure with the torch from the car, and in good old adventuring tradition, it isn't long before you have to switch on. After getting it on R for Redescribe replaces 'Everything is dark' with the location description for whichever position you have stumbled into. To complete the game you should collect 20 items of treasure and drop them into the boot of your car.

The most endearing features of this game are those subtle qualities of all well-designed adventures namely, interesting location descriptions set within a fascinating plot laid out upon a credible map. In this case the layout is exceptionally intelligent where you quickly find yourself engrossed in your surroundings because they are so believable, with no dire discrepancies to puncture the plot as in lesser games. Much as you might expect there is a stage and a small office within the village hall, a large farm on the eastern outskirts of the village complete with fields, barns, farmhouse and meadow, and to the north a dusty track leads to an old mine with a miner's shack close by. Further into the adventure the premises of the Diehard Meat Packing Co. provide a lot of worthy puzzles, and not only is the layout credible with the small of meat leading you into the freezing, processing and grading departments (and the smell of old books and leather to the company lawyer) but it is ever so easy to get around with the ingenious lift - CL calls the lift and the numbers 1 to 6 select a floor for further investigation. This is not the only novel feature as in a hollow you meet the sign 'Danger UXB Follow the arrows 88687757578878' which somehow leads you through without the report 'You have been blown to bits by an unexploded bomb! Next time watch where you stick your big feet!!'

The distribution of items is also commendably sensible and atmosphere-creating with dynamite and a long fuse in the miner's shack, a fur coat at the back of the hall, and a heated brazier in the night-watchman's office (strangely enough, the watchman doesn't catch you - unlike the thief in the cave system). In the north end of the village hall is a small office where you find a gas mask and a filing cabinet. Here the program shows its friendliness by accepting the first four letters of either CABINET or FILING in the construction OPEN CABINET whereupon R for Redescribe reveals a paper lying in an open filing cabinet. GET PAPER followed by READ PAPER gives a cryptic message which makes little sense but apparently could be helpful later on. In these ways this game climbs above the poorer Quilled games where too often actions are not reflected in the descriptions. These seemingly small points are vital to adventures which purport to be alive and interactive as it is this vibrancy which separates a computer game from an inanimate novel.



The vocabulary is exceptionally friendly for a Quilled game and nothing endears me more to an adventure than a friendly vocabulary. Think of any common words at any juncture and you blink in disbelief as you zip along to the next location such is the conditioning for disappointment after playing so many unfriendly adventures. This game is determined to let you through to solve the puzzles and not to waste time matching words. Super. These points, together with that list of words on the cover, makes this game the tops for friendliness.

Although the game does not have long location descriptions except the first) and its examine command can only be described as inoperative (since it always results in 'Can you be more specific') it seems surprisingly resilient to these drawbacks such is the undoubted strength of its good points. If you are having difficulty early on perhaps you've forgotten to wear some of the items you are carrying. I particularly like the differing, yet similarly cruel, deaths inflicted by the sever cold, and in one instance gas, in the Diehard Co. buildings. What you will find playing the game is, thankfully, that you are able to play through the branches in any order as much of the adventure is open to investigatioh right from the start. Clearly the adventure has been designed with an eye on just how players might go about tackling it.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: Relatively easy
Graphics: None
Presentation: Black on white with little use of colour. Rather poor.
Input Facility: Verb/Noun as all Quill games
General Rating: Worth exploring, especially for the novice adventurer.

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	8
Logic	8
Debugging	10
Overall Value	7



ADVENTURE TRAIL REVIEW RATINGS

ATMOSPHERE: reflects quality of location description and graphics and how credibly characters behave.

VOCABULARY: the completeness of the vocabulary and friendliness of response. All words and associated words (objects etc) in location descriptions should be included.

LOGIC: reflects the logic of the problems encountered and whether or not you are likely to be killed without warning or chance of escape.

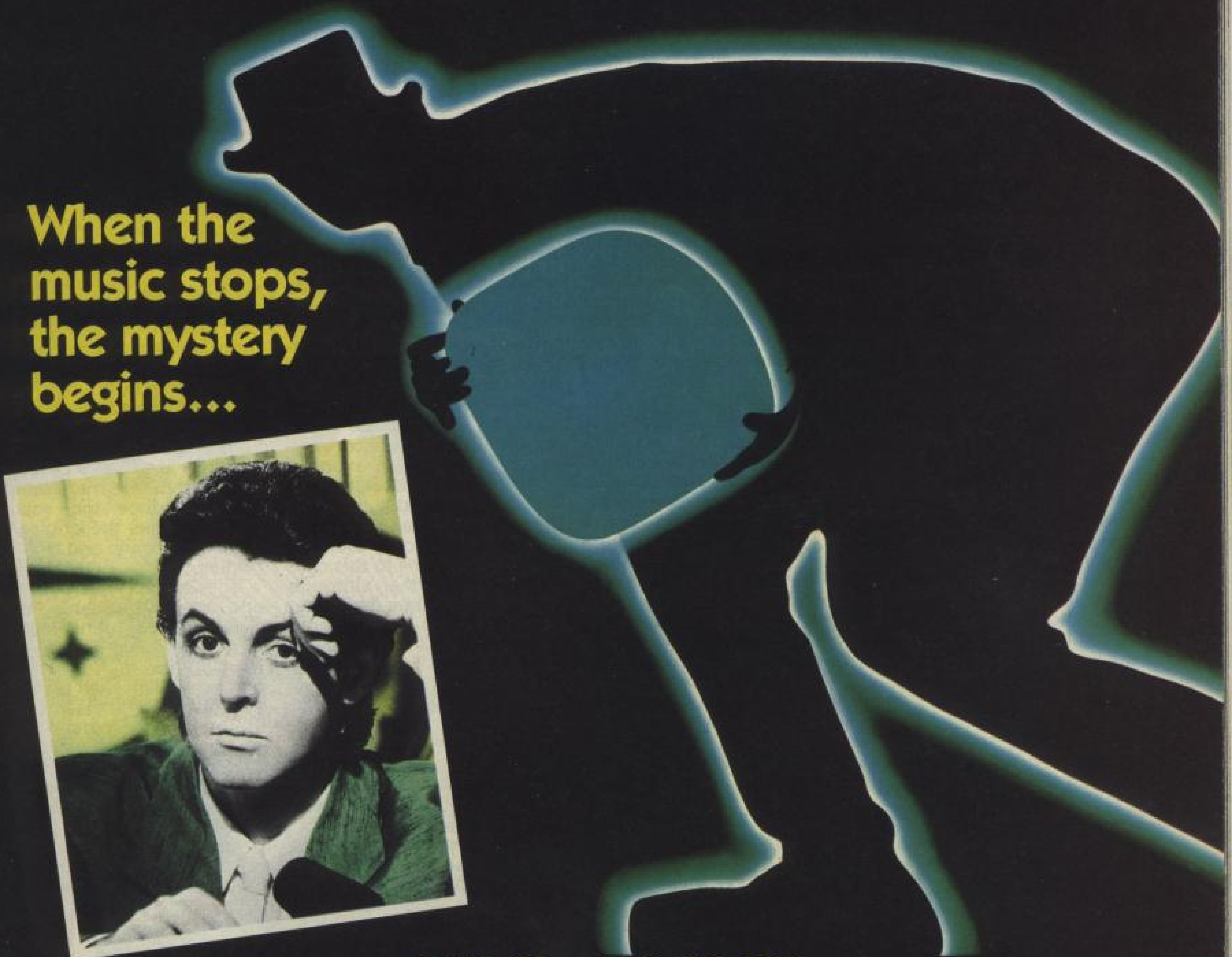
DEBUGGING: indicates the level of crashproofing. A program should not be crashed simply by making an incorrect entry or by pressing an unfortunate combination of keys.

OVERALL: general rating based on price and the other ratings BUT NOT AN AVERAGE OF THE OTHER RATINGS.

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DEAD AT THE CONTROLS



Producer: **Arctic Computing**
Retail Price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine Code**
Author: **Dave Stone**

Arctic Computing, although often distracted by the arcade sector, still churn out adventures like so many hamburgers from a takeaway. Arctic's large catalogue of competent and difficult adventures have not kept pace with the market where rivals have been quicker to innovate and refine their product. This game, again, is competent, with fine graphics and a fast response, but perhaps it is more correctly described as pedantic rather than difficult.

You, Captain Ferret, are circling a strange planet when you take a direct hit and, courageously abandoning the crew to their fate, you parachute to the relative safety of the planet's surface. Here you begin the task of collecting the very important equipment scattered about in the debris.

Not much of a storyline admit Arctic humourously and, well, at least they are honest and don't go on trying to prop up a plot that never existed. To cut a short story even shorter the locations are divided into an Aztec sector and Hyperdome area. I hope this isn't one of those reviews where you try and make sense of the questionable bits and pieces of a pre-production cassette only to find all explained about two months later in the main body of the magazine. I can see it now, *Dead at the Controls* is a superb whimsical piece, so humourous, so inventive relating how a Captain disguised as a ferret goes about proving the link between anxiety about hairy legs with the lack of trouser bottoms in pre-Socratic society and how this all relates to the artificial propagation of plants.

Anything is possible in computer software but I think it unlikely that a plot like that above will hatch out in this case.

The face the game presents to the world is attractive with a likeable loading screen followed by great graphics, although many on the forest theme are repeats, as are the pictures of the hyperdomes. One slight irritation in design is the use of large block capitals which are difficult to read when compared to their lower case brethren. The plot, or theme for that matter, remains obscure so I'll move straight onto the vocabulary. Alas, the vocabulary is most unhelpful with one or two specific examples coming to mind though the problem runs right through the adventure. Finding a mousetrap to deal with the mouse you enter GET MOUSETRAP but the program will only accept GET TRAP. Similarly GET HELMET rather than GET SPACE (HELMET) yet just as you were coming to terms with the dialogue it, on one occasion, chooses to accept the obvious; GET GEIGER or GET COUNTER are both accepted. Were this not awkward enough some of the verbs needed are ridiculously obscure. No ticking off for giving this one away. How about BAIT TRAP where SET TRAP is not accepted! The examine command is dormant and results in 'You don't see much'. Generally speaking, input is only accepted for the furtherance of your immediate task and there are few sidelines, humourous or otherwise.

I have said that this game has no discernible plot and this is true but it does have a thread running throughout in the form of a teleport machine. This machine is called by an object often found lying around on desks where calling the machine involves guessing which number to press and the location where you should press it. This is not so easy and soon becomes a chore.

Artic have produced a passable adventure which sports super graphics but is lacking in those ingredients that go to make a memorable game. Two comments best sum it up. In the first locality READ SIGN brings the retort 'Abandon all hope etc' and, when caught out by the constant number pressing to summon the teleport machine it is worth remembering this game has the most efficient QUIT I have come across. No series of Y/N hurdles to negotiate. QUIT and enter sends you straight back to the first location in record time.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: very difficult due to pedantic word-matching
Graphics: on some locations and good
Presentation: quite good although graphics scroll off
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: very fast
General rating: lacking in atmosphere

Atmosphere	**6**
Vocabulary	**5**
Logic	**6**
Debugging	**10**
Overall value	**6**

FUNHOUSE



Producer: **Pacific Software**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **Quill**
Author: **Unknown**

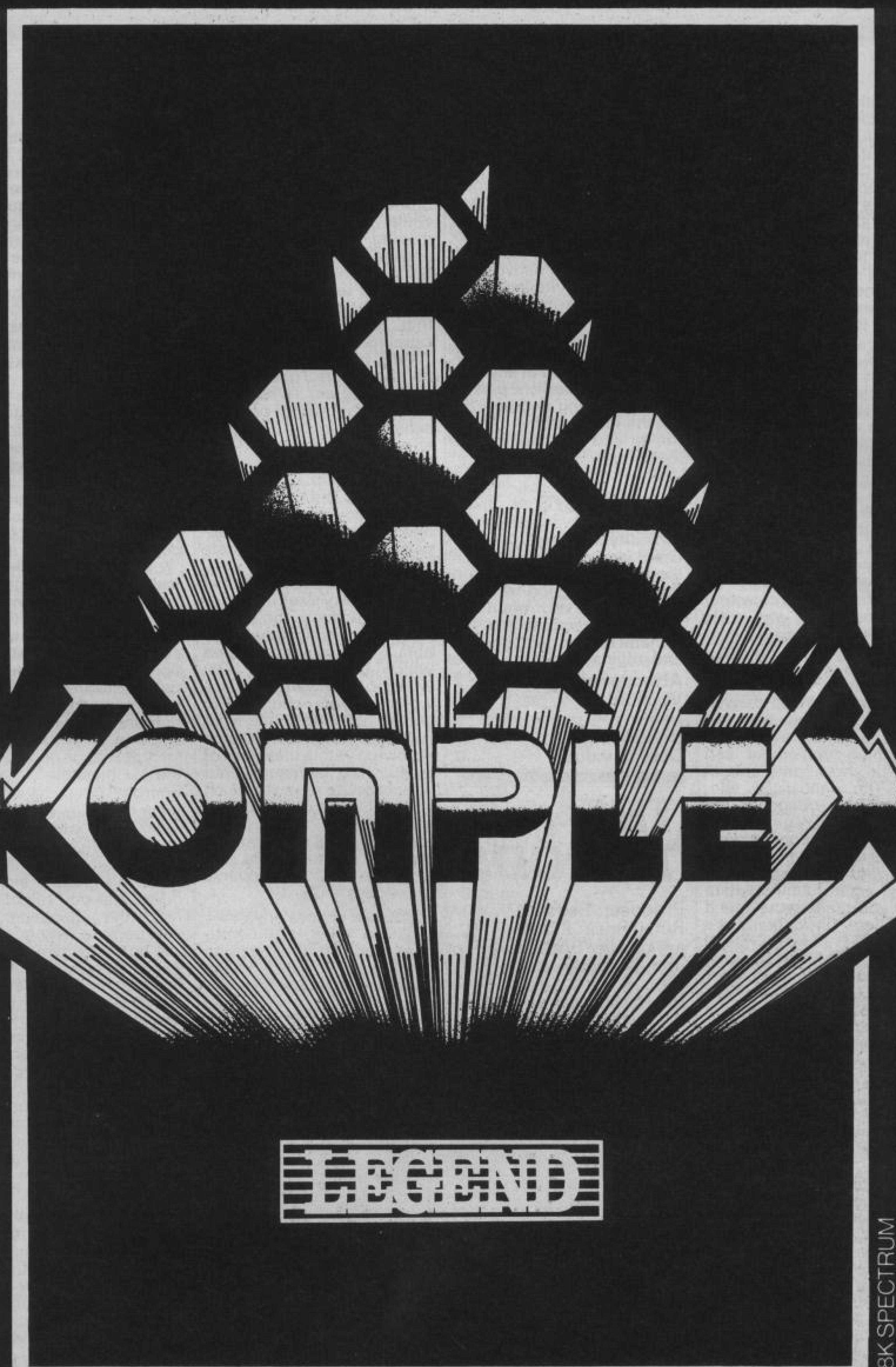
If you take satisfaction in the journalistic exposé based upon hours of painstaking investigation and the dogged tracking of hot leads then you will revel in the knowledge that this game, despite some of the more elaborate devices of concealment, can now be exposed as a Quilled game. But let me immediately deflate the impact of this news. Far from hours it really only took me minutes to come to this conclusion and further, although Quilled, this game departs to such a significant degree from earlier Quilled adventures, it would be most unfair to write it off as yet another adventure clone. To make an impact this type of game must offer something new in the way of theme or interest and I think here we have an original work and a consistently well-executed concept.

The story on the cassette inlay is a teeny bit garbled so I think I'll feed it through the journalese machine which crunches up all the words and blends them into a soft gooey sandwich spread (stretching all the facts in the process). The scene of the game is the old abandoned amusement park of Funhouse (abandoned amusement parks, like phone boxes that work, are things which have no parallel in the real world). Now, let's throw in some aliens to spice things up, a sprinkle of zombies, three dollops of green slimy dwarf, mix well and top off with a powerful brain to run it all and if this software takes off perhaps some American Film Financier could use material like this to produce the hit of 86. Herman Hermit must produce the sound track but (like the original?) he is half insane and talks in riddles.

Your quest is to search for and destroy the alien's brain. Two objects are most important to the quest. The Golden Mask, said to be in two pieces, which will protect you should you gaze upon the brain. The Golden Key is said to have the power to take the life force from the brain. This adventure will take the utmost care as the green slimy dwarves, or Gromuts, have created traps of the most despicable nature which will often result in an early death.

Let's have a look at how the game plays.

Once you get over the iron gate at the start and illuminate your way with the torch of Herman gives you (it must be night — eerie) you will find a very large adventure just waiting to be explored. The overall lay-out has been well thought through and the


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distribution of objects intelligent and logical — searching around the old ticket office turns up a ticket which proves useful for one of the fairground rides later on. Examine and search are almost always useful to the extent where if an inquiry comes to nought it might well be only the wording which needs refinement to bring some new facts to light. It is worth noting that search is distinct from examine to the extent SEARCH CHAIR brings a less than useful response while EXAMINE CHAIR reveals the goodies. The rest of the vocabulary is friendly and it's worth being persistent as often only the correct (but mostly obvious) word is accepted eg EXIT takes you out of the old ticket office caravan while OUT leaves you flummoxed amongst the litter of old ticket stubs.

The storyline is interesting and most lucid and after much playing threads begin to come together to tie up a coherent plot. For example, what would you make a badly scratched and chewed kennel, a snapped chain and a discarded bone? Almost everything you meet can work or show some animation. The vandalised telephone box responds to ANSWER PHONE and the rust remover does indeed remove rust, but in one instance ends up in one of the many instant deaths where once you realize your fate it is too late. (Incidentally, it's GET RUST REMOVER and not GET REMOVER). One item I couldn't get to work was the brass machine with a handle on one side — a shame since it turned out to be a 'What the butler saw' contraption.

The graphics, where they occur, are simple either using repeated formats or amounting to no more than the odd signpost pointing the way and represent the bare minimum for the generic subscript 'graphic adventure'. Like the rest of the program, the response time for the graphics is very fast and there's very little to prevent you shooting around most of the adventure from the off. Who knows, if you can deal with the malevolent attentions of the three Gromuts, Beltsnog, Ristlig and Talsnig (usually first encountered when you pick up food dropped by Herman) you might have a crack at getting through in one long session. Most though will be defeated by the sheer length of this one.

Funhouse is an aptly named program as it does indeed put some of the fun back into computing, not so much through silly jokes but via a good imaginative plot. The game is quite long with most locations opened up for exploration right from the start, a system which offers the interest of having many problems to solve at any one time. An amusement park is a super setting and you do get the feeling of having the run-around of a park and all that entails. Great fun.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: moderate
Graphics: some primitive illustrations
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: very fast
General rating: quite good and original scenario

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	8
Logic	6
Debugging	10
Overall value	7

THE TRIPODS

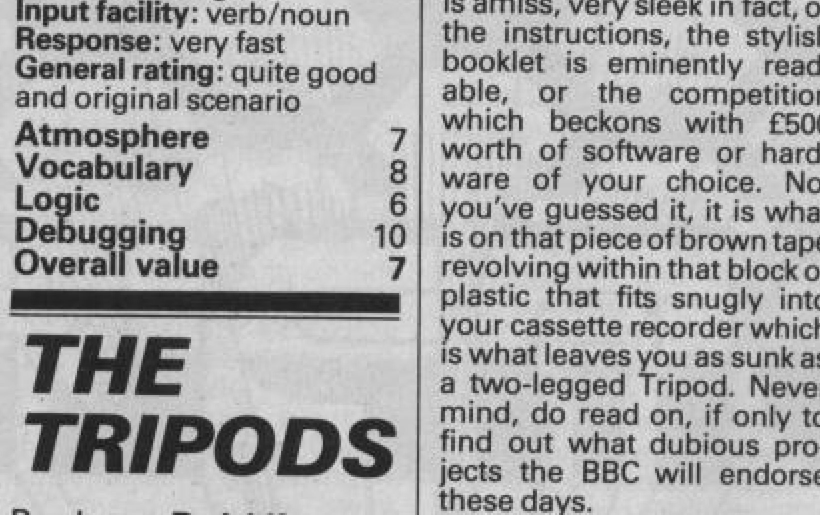
Producer: **Redshift**
Retail Price: **£12.95**
Language: **BASIC with some Machine Code**

How far should a reviewer let the reader progress through a review before unleashing the line that says it all; it is one of those unfathomable questions. I could begin by saying how interested I was in the game having seen the rather curious television series. But it was the sort of television programme that drones on in the background while you busy yourself making a large pot of tea, and as slowly as possible. Sitting drinking the tea you began to realise Tripods are harmless, it is the television that does all the fate-capping.

Well, here is that line I was on' about. *The Tripods* computer program is harmless and in the worst possible sense — it won't have you engrossed while you should be snoozing with a steaming cocoa in front of Sergeant Bilko hand The Weatherman (in case you don't watch TV, and haven't yet been capped, these are two separate programmes!)

It's not the packaging that is amiss, very sleek in fact, or the instructions, the stylish booklet is eminently readable, or the competition which beckons with £500 worth of software or hardware of your choice. No, you've guessed it, it is what is on that piece of brown tape revolving within that block of plastic that fits snugly into your cassette recorder which is what leaves you as sunk as a two-legged Tripod. Never mind, do read on, if only to find out what dubious projects the BBC will endorse these days.

You can choose any name you can think of for your character who, after crossing over from England having been recruited by Ozymandias, starts from one of the French ports (Dieppe, Le Havre etc.) to get to the White Mountains in SE France to help the free men defeat The Tripods. Having noted the TV series only for its remarkable plagiarism of War of the Worlds, its long silent passages interspersed by futuristic (Dr Who) music and laboured dialogue fit for a tortoise's coming-of-age party I couldn't tell you whether this is true to the television programme, but, come to think of it, there was a French geezer.



The booklet goes on to warn of the dangers posed by the terrain, weather and The Tripods. This sounds about as exciting as a trip to see Hartlepool's United v Re-election Town or a Bosworth High Parents' Evening but the sad point is the game is even more boring than it sounds. Take your battle with the terrain which transpires to be no more than the computer coming up with 'You cannot move there'. Far from having the eight compass directions from which to choose you often find yourself guided towards a choice between two directions, and sometimes tunnelled into just the one! If this one represents an invasion of France then here we have a game that steps off the ferry at Dieppe only to sink in the marshes around Cherbourg.

On the journey across France you will need to eat well and to collect only those items really needed as too much weight will slow you down and you might never reach the mountains. When you begin a new game you can enter the names of up to four players. The structure proves highly elastic and allows the deletion of any players who do not wish to continue, suspension of any who can't play just at the moment or the addition of any to make up the four on restarting an old game. In areas like these — offering a team game and a sophisticated array of options — this program shows some of its class.

Apart from the black guards, who will arrest, beat and possibly report you if caught, your main adversaries are those huge metallic beasts resembling 50's décor breakfast stools. Every time a Tripod sees you, your immunity to being capped may decrease and should it fall to zero you may well be capped, thereby losing all. (Incidentally, 'capped' is

something dreadful and refers to the feeling you get when you are the only one wearing his cap on the first day at the local, posh, public school). If you want to move on and there is a Tripod nearby you will always be noticed, and possibly capped, unless you first press T allowing you the options of either hiding, or disorientating The Tripod by jamming its communications with a radio or dazzling it with a strategically placed mirror.

If the screen layout resembles *Lords of Midnight* (or rather, *Doomdark's Revenge*, as the shading for the sky is very similar) then that can hardly be a bad thing given that game's universal appeal. *The Tripods* has a very pleasing appearance, the sort that lends itself well to colourful screen shots in glossy magazines with trees in full blossom, fields, marshes and farms, windmills and ruins, castles and small towns. When the day clock at the bottom of the screen runs out you will be forced to camp until the next day. our food then goes down while you eat and your health improves with the rest. At the end of the week the items you are carrying will be examined and the worn out or broken ones thrown away. Also, all four players receive an update. The next players then get a turn where even if they follow the same route may meet different people or experience greater success than yourself.

This is the paragraph that has our Tripod hopping on one leg. This game is so slow you become aware of grass growing and the vastness of geological time. It thus joins the burgeoning populace of the home for geriatric games and its founding member, *The Wrath of Magra*. After five minutes you become lethargic and disinterested as if sitting in one of those interminable college lectures where everyone falls asleep to the metronomic chantings of the ranting crony at the front. This simile is most apt as it is the feeling of non-involvement which strikes you about the game. Movement is often restricted, choices in any one frame are between picking up an item or not, or talking to a stranger or not and the results of your actions are similarly hit or miss. Arbitrariness and a deep detachment win the day, so much so that even a dedicated reviewer cannot muster the patience to check whether this game really expects three people to sit and wait all that time while one person completes his moves.

The Tripods is a real-time game but this feature is rendered almost useless since it is painfully slow due to much of its action relying on BASIC. Its complexity does not warrant the label 'strategy' and there is little left to do but choose between move, eat, pick or examine pack when the program eventually delivers a prompt for you to do something. The Tripods is somewhat similar to the strategy classic Lords of Midnight but does not offer as much flexibility in movement, as deep a perspective a landscape or reasons to choose one direction over another. To the extent *Doomdark's Revenge* expanded upon a tried and tested theme, *The Tripods* does not develop the television series to its full potential and pales in comparison.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: Easy to play but will probably take a while to complete.
Graphics: Quite good 3D perspective as in Lords of Midnight
Presentation: With text on both top and bottom of graphics, rather messy
Response: Very slow, has you continually prodding keyboard for a response
General Rating: Although it takes many ideas from L of M it is a bore. Overpriced.

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	N/A
Logic	5
Debugging	9
Overall value	4

PROFILE

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

RICHARD WOODWARD and ROBERT WALLER are between them Mizar, the people behind the CRASH Smashed OUT OF THE SHADOWS which Derek Brewster thought was the best arcade adventure he had seen in a long while (see December Issue).

Out of the Shadows is their first game for the Spectrum — or indeed for any micro — and it was developed from a version written by Richard on a Univac some four years ago. Richard, an applications programmer specialising in COBOL packages — and incidentally a keen astronomer — teamed up with Robert who has been working 'at the bits and bytes level for years', writing operating systems and communications software, again for large machines. Taking over a dining room table and covering it with little more that a couple of Spectrums, they set to work last year to convert Richard's original game to run on the Spectrum.

As you might imagine, there was a fair bit of compacting down to be done — but after six months work *Out of the Shadows* had been completely re-written from scratch, with all the subroutines used being totally new. The finished program boasts a number of very original graphics ideas to do with the casting of shadows (hence its title). For instance the light that your lantern casts only illuminates a part of the screen; as the oil in your lantern runs out, the pool of light it casts gradually contracts before you're plunged into total darkness. The graphics side of programming is very important to Mizar: 'We thought of the pictures we wanted, got them working and then wrote the story around them,' Richard explains.

The front line of computer graphics is normally deemed to be the preserve of such film companies as Lucasfilms of *Star Wars* fame, and Disney — responsible for *Tron*. Using he Cray II (a mind-bogglingly large machine, capable of processing vast tracts of information incredibly fast), and some very advanced mathematical techniques it is possible to make a high quality animated film produced totally by computer. It takes three months computer time to produce fifteen minutes of film, though — the Cray goes away and just thinks for up to an hour for each frame of film created! (See CRASH issue 11 December page 156, the article on the film *The Last Starfighter* for more about the Cray).

The next game Mizar will be releasing is going to incorporate a naturalistic landscape, displayed from a projection. The closer you get to, say, a coastline, the more detail you will see. To do this, they will be using the same sort of mathematical techniques, involving fractal numbers, as the programs on the Cray II to produce animated landscapes.

The mathematics behind this kind of computer graphics work is a little beyond Pythagoras and 'the sum of the squares' stuff. Both Richard and Robert are mathematicians. Robert has a degree in Maths and Computer Science, but describes Richard as the true mathematician: 'Dick sees problems as having mathematical solutions. For instance he would draw a Sine Wave on a computer screen using a sine wave function; I'd probably use a look-up table, and get there too, but in a different way'.

Obviously *Starwars IV* isn't about to be knocked up on Mizar's dining room table quite yet, but their next game, an extension of the theme of *Out of the Shadows*, will incorporate state-of-the-art graphics techniques which no-one else has thought of bringing to the Spectrum — or been able to!

'We'll certainly be taking the graphics several stages further and they will include a naturalistic projection of views of the playing environment; the intelligence of your adversaries will also be upgraded', Robert explained.

In *Out of the Shadows* you can preserve the continuity of your character, taking him onto the next scenario once you've completed one level of the game, and you retain the skills and experience gained. This owes a lot to the role playing games, such as Dungeons and Dragons, which Robert agrees are a source of inspiration to them.

'We prefer to give the player as wide a choice of options as possible', he explained, 'in *Out of the Shadows* there is a range of some thirty commands any of which can be used at any time. We want to give our games as much depth, breadth and sense of place and involvement as possible.

'In our next game we plan to computerise the Dungeon-master in effect — keeping the rules and regulations of the game as minimal as possible to allow the player to get involved in the game itself. You will play the part of the main character, or protagonist, and will be in an environment where other lead characters exist who each have their own aims and definite objectives. You will be competing against each other, and at times working together, all using common resources in the game environment'.

In the longer term, Mizar sees a future for co-operative games, perhaps with people in one geographical area meeting together, linking up their Spectrums and playing a multi-user version of *Out of the Shadows*.

'We'd love to be able to do it at the moment', Richard said, 'but it's just not commercially practical at present. In the UK modems are both rare and expensive — and British Telecom's prices are too high for most people to be able to afford to play multi-user games via the telephone network. We'd have do do something for groups of people who could actually play together.'

Unless British Telecom regularly reads CRASH and drops its local call charges as a result (the first being likely, the second less so!), it's improbable that MUD type games will catch on in this country in the near future. Mizar may well write software for the Spectrum which allows people to link their machines together via Interface 1's so that they've each got a terminal into a common environment which runs across and around each member of the group — but not just at the moment! They're quite busy enough on their next game thank you.

Mizar is a very small software house — with development work being done on a dining room table in Milton Keynes and only one full time worker, Richard Woodward. For the moment Robert is still working full time as a systems programmer, which has its disadvantages in that the two partners really only get together at weekends to bounce ideas off one another.

It's no longer easy to start out in the software industry — a lot of financial muscle is buying its way into the market and some of the original back-room companies have survived to grow into large organisations. There's little doubt that if Mizar had been formed a couple of years ago, they would have had little trouble in quickly establishing their reputation. What problems are faced by a small software house with an excellent product?

'We both feel that we've produced a game which is technically good', Robert says, 'but we've realised that razzamatazz and hype is needed to sell it. The marketing side of software production is now as important as the content of the game itself — and in some cases is done better than the programming. Nowadays, you've got to be able to sell to the big distributors to make your mark'. Richard agreed, and added that it's now difficult to break into the market-place with some retail chains adopting a policy of only stocking the top ten titles. 'The market's so crowded, and there's a lot of inferior games on the shelves that will probably have to be sold off first before new products get a look in. Some of the chains simply aren't listening to street-level opinion any more, but just persevere with old favourites.'

With big firms which have massive financial backing getting involved in the software market, including book and magazine publishers, has Mizar any plans to stop going it alone? 'Not at all', came the emphatic response from Robert, 'we want to remain independent — someone's got to be around doing something innovative. If we signed up with a publisher we'd probably end up producing an amalgam of the current best game formats, rather than being allowed to come up with new and innovative techniques and ideas'.

'It would be tempting at times', Richard added ruefully, 'we're obviously very small as yet. Producing a new game with the six month lag time we need isn't easy, as we can only get together at evenings and week-ends.

'And unless some parts of the distribution trade brushes up its ethics, a lot of smaller firms like ourselves may end up being put out of business — we've already had one distributor go bust on us, and it hurts when you're small — the large organisations with lots of money behind them can ride such problems.'

It's not far short of amazing for a new software company to get a CRASH Smash with their very first game. Mizar's existing product, and their plans for the future should see them firmly established amongst the leaders in the adventure/role playing field. You just wait and see — and while you're waiting for the distributors to catch on to the fact that you don't have to be an established mega-corporation to write a first class game, you could do a lot worse than while away a few hours with *Out of the Shadows*.



NEW RELEASES
Fantastic Voyage
The game of the film by
20th Century Fox
6.95 48K SPECTRUM
Mighty Magus
QUICKSILVA
Argus Press Software Group
Quicksilva Mail Order,
P.O. Box 6, Wimborne,
Dorset BA21 7PY.
Telephone (0202) 891744.
Selected titles available at
WHSMITH
Boots
WOOLWORTH
John Menzies
and leading multiple retailers and specialist computer stores.



SIGNPOST

The Gremlins have been out again in SIGNPOST. They changed Farflame's location in *Lords of Midnight* to the Tower or Ashimar: it should have been the Ruin of Coroth.

Ivar Bundulis **from Shrewsbury complains about the mapping of adventures and writes:**

Am I the originator of the campaign for logical movements in adventures? My many maps are very confusing with so many arrows joining impossible locations; even you sin in this way in *Kentilla*. The swamps of Caradoom! Please, as an influential member of the adventure world, could you pave the way in easy-to-map adventures, for the sake of human sanity.

I don't know about being influential but this is one sinner who has now repented. I too hate unmappable areas and after an awful lot of adventure playing I can only conclude that such areas add nothing to a game but annoyance. The worst unmappable area is the maze (which for some totally inexplicable reason all adventures seem to contain) and is illogical and out of context in most games. At best the maze can only be described as an extremely unoriginal space filler!

Level 9 has been taking quite a bit of criticism about their change of style. One such critic is Ron Wells **of Brentwood who writes:**

What on earth are Level 9 up to? After establishing themselves as the leading adventure software house with their text-only, non-gimmick adventures, they have, with *Return to Eden*, gone totally overboard with glaring graphics; a dreadful redesigned text which is virtually unreadable, and a most unpleasant black/yellow colour combination. All very uneasy on the eyes!

The topic of sex roles in adventures crops up now and again in the SIGNPOST mailbag: on this subject Ms Suzi Yann **from Dudley writes:**

I recently bought two adventures *Wrath of Magra* and *Tower of Despair* and yet again my character is the hero.

Why in these fantasy games do the normal(?) sex roles apply? Why is it only men and male characters that are the control characters? After all, if the gamer can be Elf, Priest, Wizard, or Goblin, why not female? Imagine if every game you have forced you to be female. . . .

All programmers have to do is not define the gender of characters in the program or booklet. It would be much nicer to read 'the fate of the world lies in your hands' rather than '. . . in his hands'.

Remember you are writing programs for us, and a lot of us are female! Please think before you code.

Many adventures go to great lengths to develop the plot and atmosphere with a detailed story before the game is started. Under such circumstances, as indeed with any novel, it would be difficult if not impossible to leave the sex of the lead character undefined. I feel that the two programs that you mention do fall into this category, however, after saying this I agree that most programs could be a little more flexible on this subject by either allowing sex to be defined at the start of the program or by avoiding any reference to gender. If you want a really good adventure with a female lead character, try any of Level 9's Silicon Dream trilogy.

Glenn White **from Portsmouth with his friend** Derek Johnstone **has solved the murder case in Melbourne House's brilliant *Sherlock* and has supplied some tips which other detectives may find useful.**

Upon starting, get the lamp and make sure Watson follows you. After getting a train from Victoria Station get off at Kings Cross and go to platform 3. If you haven't dawdled along the way you should see Inspector Lestrade. Follow him into the train and when you reach Leatherhead it is a good idea to follow him until you have been around the Brown's house and the Jones' house. If you don't you will be stopped at the gate by a policeman. Also, if you do follow him, you get all the alibis. When you visit Basil Phipps house (which is south from the main street) you will find in his bedroom Baroque music on the piano and Chopin on the gramaphone. Compare this with his alibi!

Inspector Lestrade thinks the killer is Percival Ffoulkes because his initials are on the victim's crumpled note and because he knocked out a Policeman. This is not so, because if you visit his home in Slater Street (you get there direct from your own home) you will see he takes opium, which distorts his thoughts.

At around 12.25 am to 12.30 am take a visit to Basil Phipps' house again and go South from the dining room, you can open the safe and find some blackmail letters. If you open the safe before this time you will be shot by Basil.

Now for some addresses:

Basil Phipps has two addresses, one in Cobden Lane, Leatherhead and one in Camden Street in London which is reached by calling a cab outside Paddington station.

Percival Ffoulkes also has two addresses, one at Sidmouth Street and one at Slater Street, both of which can be reached from Baker Street.

Tricia Fender lives in Portman Street (also reachable from Sherlock's home) and when you get past the locked door you will find an unfinished blackmail letter.

There are two more main addresses — but we cannot reveal them, as they would give away too much, and would spoil your enjoyment of the game.



In the February issue I requested help in passing the Angel of Death in *Tower of Despair*. I must thank all those who wrote in with the solution. For explorers still stuck at this point, try DSFFQ, VTF EBHHS.

I was a little annoyed at this solution as I had kept using the first verb in conjunction with a direction, only to be killed. This doesn't seem quite fair!

Also in the February issue I requested help for Simon Webster who was having difficulty in getting the halter from the harpies in *Perseus and Andromeda*. I would like to thank Tina Jarvis of Birmingham who wrote in with the solution and also Dave Hauard from Fareham who very kindly supplied the complete solution to this adventure. To get the halter DMJNC UFNQMF, TQSFBE OFU.

In the same adventure Kate Maloney wants to know how to fly — you will need to XFBS IUF TBOEBMT.

Up in the Wilderness of Northumberland a lone warlord by the name of Stephen Carrigan still struggles to defeat Doomdark, from the windswept coastal settlement of Blyth he writes:

In *Lords of Midnight* I have searched and searched for the ice crown with no success. People say that it is at the Tower of Doom but when I got Fulkrin the Skulkrin there it was nowhere to be seen.

I used the map that was published in CRASH but still couldn't locate it. Could you please tell me where it is.

Actually it is the Tower of Doom, but it can only be found by Morkin who must search the Tower.

The epic adventure *Eureka!* has proved popular and very difficult. The following questions asked by Derek Sydeserff of Longniddry, Scotland are typical of most I have received and have very kindly been answered by Domark:

THE PREHISTORIC AGE
1) How do you get past the Brachiosaurus with the log? XBJU IFSF, XBJU IFSF.

ROMAN TIMES
1) How do you take the thorn from the lion's paw? QVMM UIPSO.
2) How do you get into the leper colony? JO HVMMZ HJWF DPJO.
3) Can you buy slaves? You don't need to.
4) How do you get an invitation to Nero's Palace? At competition VTF QPUJPO. Then you must greet Nero, to do this BWF DBFTBS.

ARTHURIAN BRITAIN
1) How do you kill the wolf? You need a weapon, then LJMM XPMG (several times).
2) How do I kill the Green Knight? Same as for wolf.
3) How do I get into the Abbey? DPOGFTT TJOT, HJWF DSVDJGJY (DBSSJFE CZ RVFTUJOH CFBTU).

ESCAPE FROM COLDITZ
1) What do you do with the dynamite when you take it under the bridge? QMBDF EZOBNJUF, HP UP BOPUIFS MPDBUJPO, VTF EZOBNJUF.

MODERN CARRIBEAN
1) How do you get into the estate? HP UP FMFDUSJD GFODF, VTF QBSB, VQ.
2) How do you enter the plane? SVO FBTU, KVNQ JO (make sure you have enough stamina before attempting this).
3) How do I get the radio to work? Don't bother TNBTI JU JO UIF DFMM

A couple of months ago I gave a clue to the whereabouts of the key to Tylon's chest in *Kentilla*. However, as I have been inundated for further requests for help, I will grudgingly give the solution. It is FYBNJOF CFEQPTU.

In the same game Richard Evans is unable to dry the damp moss. Try ESPQQJOH JU PO UIF TDPSDIFE QMBJOT.

For Chris Greenhough from London who has difficulty rescuing Timandra without falling victim to the Giant Tentacles, try DBSSZJOH UIF EFBE RVBSH JO DBSBEPPN.

Along with many other adventurers Stephen Cummins is unable to leave Tylon's Castle. Examine the Statue — it holds the key.

Stephen also asks how to get past the high-gravity area in *The Hulk*? To enter it you must be the Hulk (TM), to achieve this CJUF MJQ.

Stuart Shaw of Willenhall, West Midlands is having trouble with *Temple of Vran* and writes:

After getting the stepladder, Trampoline and the cane, how do I cross the lava, the quicksand or enter the hole 13 feet up the east wall?

To enter the hole, UBLF TUFQMBEEFS UP SPPN XJUI USBQEPPS JO GMPPS, HP CFMPX BOE PQFO USBQEPPS. To cross the lava ESPQ TUFQMBEEFS BOE USBNQPMJOF, DMJNC TUFQMBEEFS, KVNQ USBNQPMJOF.

Roger Cheetham of Rotherham is still falling victim to the blue bulbous eyes in *The Hobbit*. To avoid their sting XBJU UXJDF before moving.

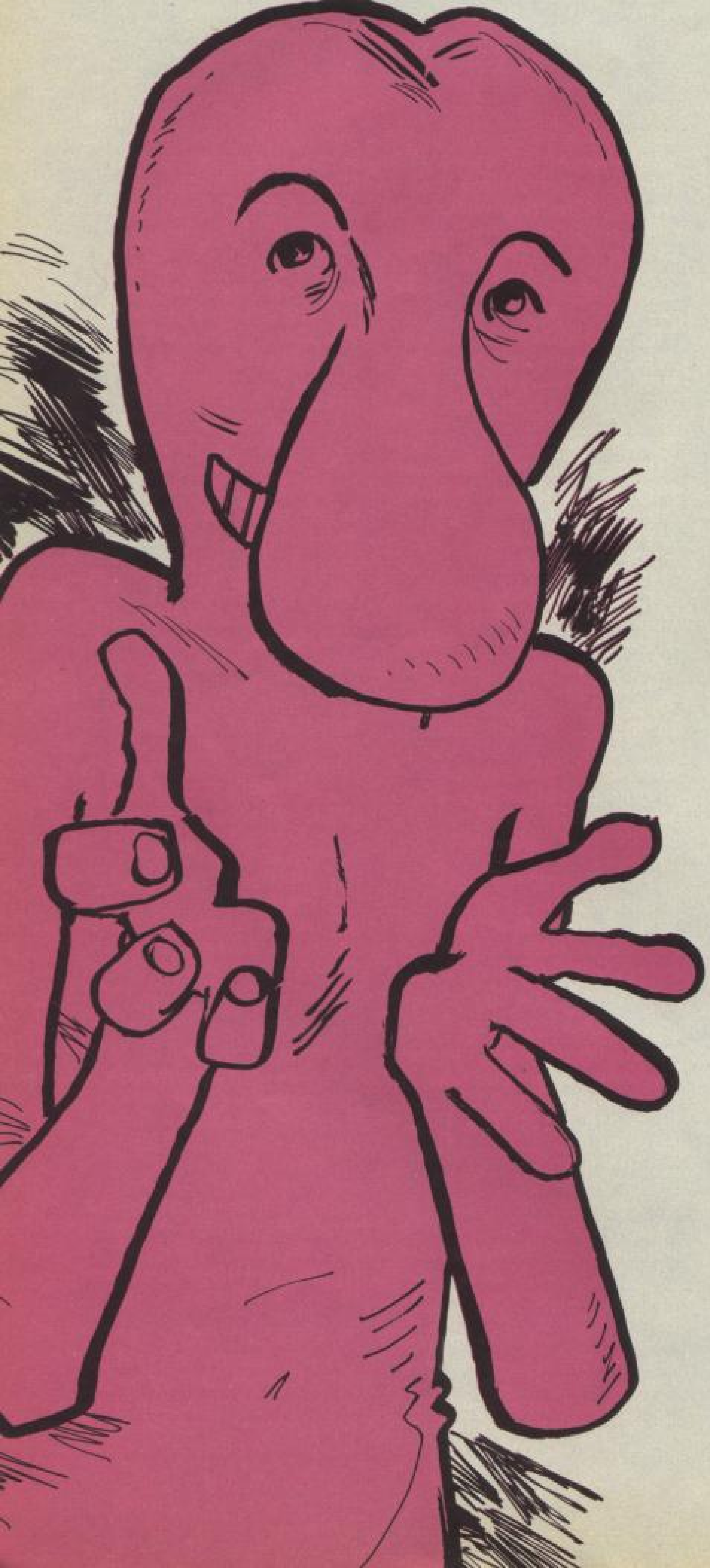
Well I've about run out of space for another month, and anyway it's already after 3 am — must find a damp, dark place to hide before sunrise. There a quite a few letters which I would have liked to have published but space is limited, anyway I'll try and fit them in next month and in the meantime keep the letters flowing.

This month's £12 of software is won by Glen White from Portsmouth for his tips on *Sherlock* (hang on! He's requested *Alien 8*, shouldn't the prize be an adventure?)

Crash Competition

COMPITITION!

A Chance to Win Some Loverly Prizes AND an Exclusive Behind the Scenes Glimpse of Ogre's Lair — Automata!!!



In an exclusive interview with Automata's **Piman** who visited CRASH's offices in Ludlow the other day on a top secret, hush-hush mission, we learnt that **Croucher** and **Penfold** are now driving the little pi-people like slaves.

An ashen-faced Piman revealed the limits to which he is being pushed. 'Orders received in the morning post are now being despatched within a couple of hours . . . customers have started ringing up the office to complain that their goods have arrived too soon!' he choked. 'I had to come and tell you of our plight.'

Nose quivering with emotion, Piman explained that the whole Automata operation has now been geared towards catering for the mail order market. 'There's not even time for a game of cards at work any more, let alone cups of tea . . . and they're taking all the credit for my 10 pack idea too, the rotters.'

We put it to him that it could be a clear case of meglomania, following the success of Deus ex Machina which was voted 'Program of the year' in the Computer Trade Association's annual awards. 'It's very good, after all,' we reminded him, showing him our review in November's CRASH '. . . Croucher and Penfold'll get over it soon, you'll see,' we said reassuringly.

'Sniff' was his only reply, and the tears began to fall.

We had to do something. It was time for positive action. Threadbare carpets shrink when they're cried on, and the office tea kitty had already been raided to buy Lloyd Mangram a desk. It was stop the Piman crying time, or no tea for weeks. What to do?

Then inspiration hit us. (Ouch!) 'Why not suggest a new 10-pack when you get back? Make sure they give you full credit for the idea this time, and suggest that new programmers be invited to submit their programs to Automata for inclusion on a royalty basis!!' we suggested, hopefully.

Dry-eyed, and smiling once more, the Piman hurried out of our offices. We breathed a sigh of relief and coughed over a Woodbine. He was happy again; our carpet still fitted — and best of all the tea-kitty was safe. Bliss. Happi-ness restored. Another satisfied client for the CRASH 'Z Team'. .

Another day dawned. The Ludlow sparrows had just given up banging on the office windows demanding breakfast when Croucher rang up. 'Hi, I've just had a really good idea . . . we're going to do some more ten packs,' he crowed. 'Mel and I are going to get lots of new programs and put them onto a new ten pack — if any of your readers want to send us a program we'll make sure they're not rooked . . . we'll pay royalties, on time too. Ta ra!'

Fink! Why can't they treat the Piman as well as they treat their programmers down at Automata? Well, we tried. . . .

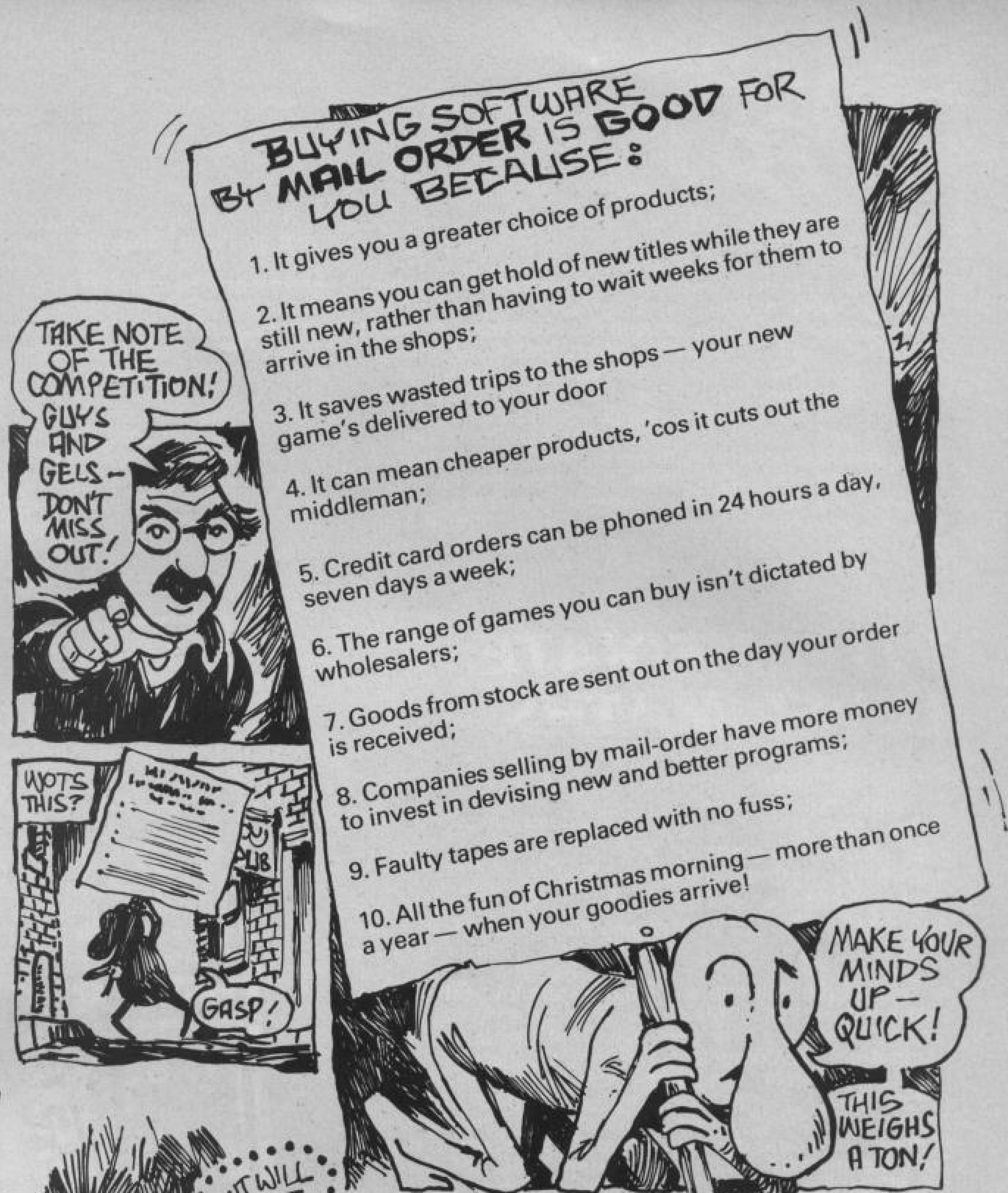
Before he came to see us, the Piman spent a while scratching his head (and his hooter) and came up with ten reasons why he thinks buying software by mail order is good for you.

Trouble is, he left the CRASH offices in such a rush that he forgot to put them in the right order — so we'll have to ask you to finish the job for the little pink person before he gets into more trouble with those mean Automata ogres, Croucher and Penfold.

We've printed the ten points ol' pinky gave us and labelled them A — J. What you've got to do, using every last reserve of your skill and judgement, is to choose the five most important reasons for buying software by mail order and then put them in order of importance.

For instance, if you think **B** is the most important, write it down next to **1**, and so-on till you reach **5**. Then stop and send your entry in! Entries, as usual, on a postcard to:

AUTOMATA COMPETITION
CRASH, P.O. BOX 10
LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE
SY8 1DB by APRIL 26th.







The prizes? Oh yes, the prizes.

The first five correct solutions out of the bag will win a copy of *Deus ex Machina*, and copies of *Piman's greatest hits Vol I* and *II*; the next five correct entries win a copy of *Deus*; the next ten solutions will win their very own 10 pack and last, but not least, ten lucky winners will have their personal copy of *Go to Jail*.

CRASH COURSE



A college in Aberdeen recently advertised an evening class for people wanting to know more about microcomputers. There were twelve places available on the course, but over two hundred applications came in — mainly from parents wanting to keep up with their children!

Children are much more receptive to using computers than adults are. An adult, faced with a micro for the first time, tends to be rather nervous about touching the keys in case the machine is harmed; children, however, have few such fears. The easiest way for someone — child or adult — to become familiar with a microcomputer is simply to load a game and play it for a while. Then, the move towards learning basic programming skills can be made more confidently.

I have reviewed three educational programs this month, and they are all games which parents could profitably help their children play at home. A child or teenager working on an educational game alone needs a fair degree of motivation, and must apply a lot of concentration to succeed The fifteen year olds who tested these games for me were initially quite happy to work by themselves without assistance, but after a short while I found some intervention was needed. We talked about the games, discussing the quality of the booklets, the graphics and so on, and then I was able to draw their attention to the particular educational features of the programs which I considered important. I would hope, therefore, that parents and teachers would be encouraged to get involved in the same way, helping the young person use these games to their best advantage.

Many adults today lament the advent of, first, the television, then the microcomputer, claiming that these inventions have killed the art of conversation. Now they have the chance to rectify matters by joining their children at the computer keyboard!

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL MATHS

Producer: **Scisoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£**
Age group: **this is not specified anywhere in the package, but it would be suitable for 12 — 16 year olds**

In spite of the dull title and packaging, this Maths tutorial package is very well thought-out and competently produced. It contains five programs: Tesselations; Number Machine; Graph; Number Line and Factory. For the uninitiated (including myself before I used this game!) a tesselation is a mosaic pattern in which all the pieces fit together to cover a space completely. The first program allows you to design and colour a variety of patterns using the arrow keys to move the shapes and 'P' to paint them in.

The second program draws a number machine and requires the player to find the rule it works by. Beginning from the very basic 'Put in 4, out come 8', the computer continues to simple algebraic equations such as 'y=2x'. This certainly is a program which encourages the player to think, and is an excellent way of explaining an algebraic concept.

Graph builds on what has been learnt in Number Machine — the computer draws a graph of an equations and a choice needs to be made as to which of three given equations produces that graph. The booklet gives a very clear explanation of how to work out the correct answer.

The final two programs — Number Line and Factory — are based on games formats, the former beginning with sums using positive and negative numbers, then progressing to a game on the numberline. My fifteen year old testers loved this game, and it certainly gave them excellent practice in mental arithmetic. Factory though, is the most enjoyable of all the games in the package. In this program, the player is in charge of a small factory making cases of Fizzbees (whatever they are!) and must decide how many cases to manufacture each week, what the selling price will be and whether or not money should be spent on advertising. The computer works out the sales figures and says if you have made a profit or loss. This game is a very clever way of encouraging children to apply their mathematical knowledge in a practical situation. The pupils who tested the game were quickly engrossed and a great deal of lively discussion was generated as they debated the quantities to be manufactured, the selling prices and so on.

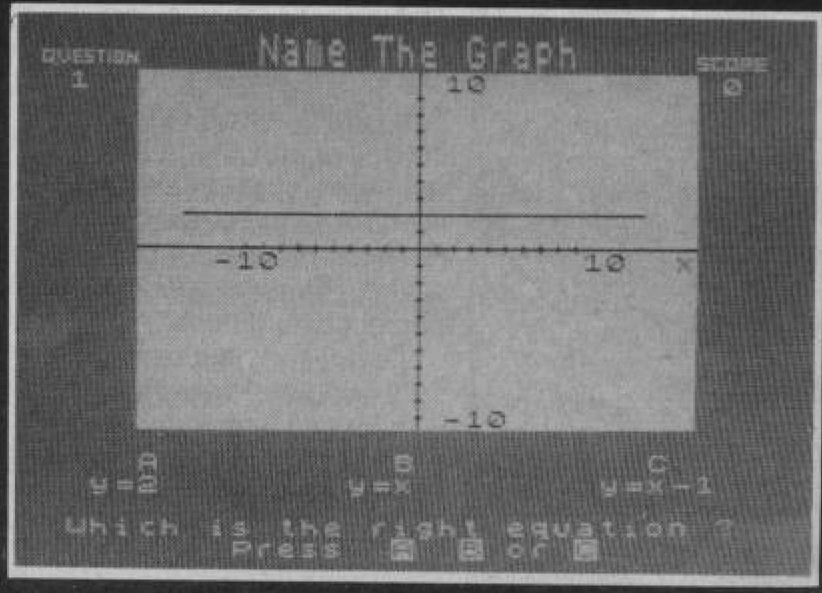
This package, which has been approved by teachers, is really very good value, and would be useful for home as well as school use. As one of the testers said, 'I don't like maths and I wouldn't have bought this game for myself, but the program makes everything seem quite interesting and I really enjoyed the Factory game'

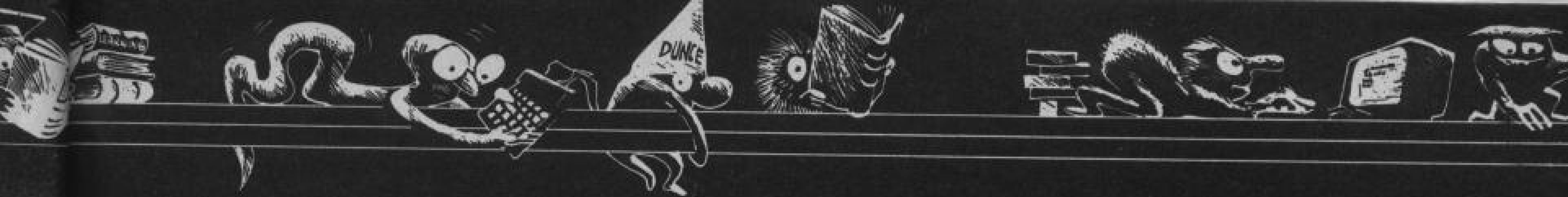


COMMENTS

Control keys: as few keys as possible are used for simplicity
Keyboard play: very fast and responsive
Use of colour: sensibly limited for the sake of clarity in some games
Graphics: very clear
General rating: highly recommended

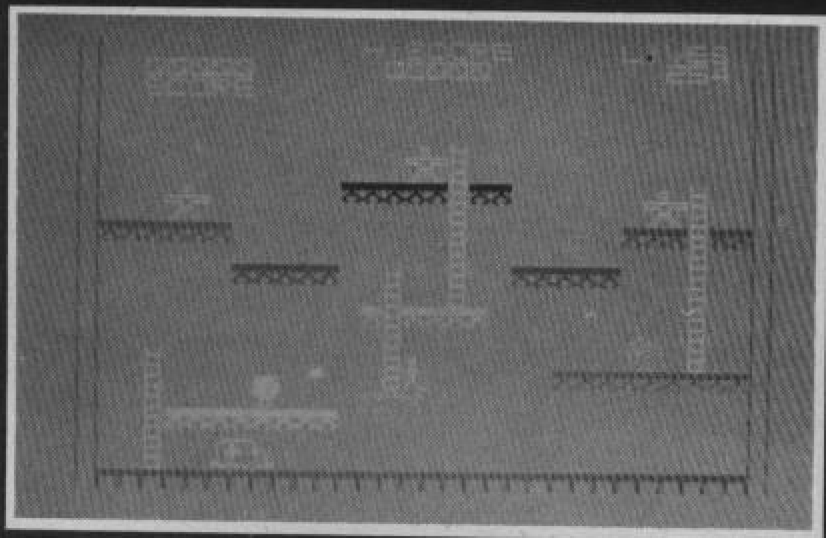
Algebra in graphic form — can you name the graph?





DISEASE DODGERS

Producer: **Sinclair/ MacMillan Education**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Five Ways Software (Science Horizons Series)**
Age group: **8 — 14 years**



Some of the more vile diseases try to dodge the player's scrutiny

The educational aim behind this tutorial-type game is to show that health, diet and exercise are interrelated. The arcade format has the player trying to help the Dodger family to build up immunity to avoid the onslaught of attacking germs, by eating wisely and my taking the correct amount of exercise. The program attempts to show that different countries of the world have to cope with different problems of health and diet, and tries to show that staying alive in the Third World presents greater problems in avoiding the dangers of life than we face in Europe.

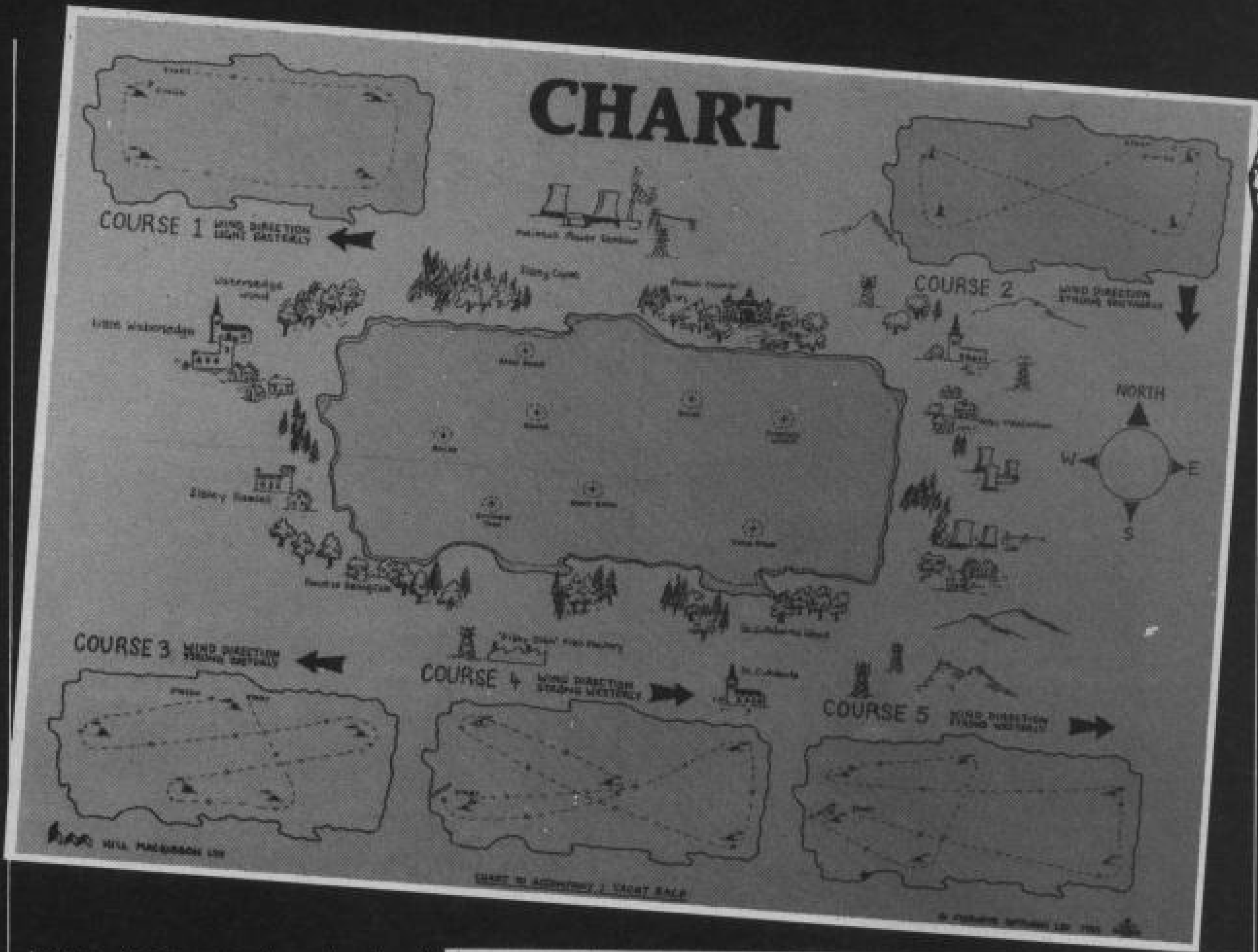
The game begins with the Dodger father — who is the easiest to keep alive — and then becomes progressively more difficult with the other members of the family — Mum, Granny, teenager and toddler, each of whom has different dietary requirements. The final target is to keep all of the Dodgers alive in all of the countries. The game cashes in on children's attraction to the arcade format, attempting to use it as a vehicle for sound educational aims. Unfortunately, however, the arcade element is so successful that much of the message is lost: for example the germs attacking the Dodgers are not seen by the pupils who played the game with me as representing 'broad categories of ill ness . . . ranging from the common cold, flu, cough, sickness, to more serious ones such as malaria' as is the intention, but simply as enemies which 'zap' the Dodgers. Some of the foods are very difficult to identify from the graphics, and it becomes increasingly unlikely that the player will 'see how a balanced diet (including a range of vitamins, protein, carbohydrates, fat, mineral salts) influences health.

The copy we tested seemed to be faulty. No matter how we tried we couldn't make the exercise option work.

Disease Dodgers is the sort of educational game which, in spite of having a laudable aim, does not wholly succeed. The packaging is probably not attractive enough for the game to be bought by teenagers; and it

YACHT RACE

Producer: Hill MacGibbon
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: £9.95
Author: Five Ways Software
Age: for anyone wanting to learn to sail

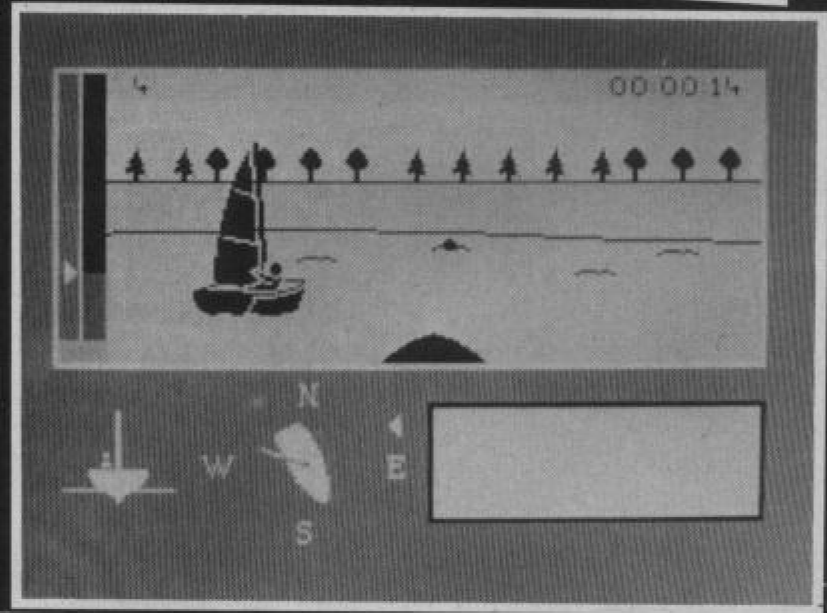


Yacht Race is one of the Hill MacGibbon 'Games to stretch the mind' series, and is perhaps best described as a computer version of the Teach Yourself book. The Learning to Sail section of the program is aimed at the complete novice and covers techniques for steering a dinghy, trimming the sail and setting the balance. The top half of the screen shows the view you can see over the bows of the dinghy, while the lower part shows wind direction, the direction in which you are sailing, and features indicators for balance, sail-trim and speed.

By pressing C and V the player can look towards port and starboard respectively, and can also check the position of the dinghy on the course by pressing E to see the computerised chart. A printed chart is also supplied with the game, and this gives the position of the obstacles such as sandbanks, rocks and sunken wrecks. After the basic sailing techniques have been mastered, the player can progress to various races against the computer boat.

The accompanying booklet is very comprehensive and clearly explains the skills to be learned. There is even a glossary of sailing terms such as 'tacking' and 'gybing', together with a few Yacht Race rules, eg. a windward boat keeps clear of a leeward boat.

There are, however, a few problems with the graphics in the game. First of all, the water is the same colour as the land, which takes a lot of getting used to; secondly the perspective fails to change according to the distance the dinghy is from the shore, so that constant reference to the computerised chart is essential.

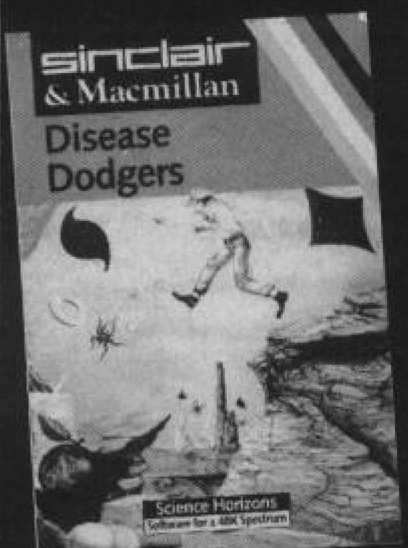


An example of the impressive graphics in YACHT RACE, but a pity the sea and land are the same colour

All in all though, the program is very good value and as my testers agreed, would be enjoyed by seasoned sailors as well as by complete beginners.

COMMENTS

Control keys: it is difficult to remember all the keys which are to be used, though the booklet does print a summary. Two keys each are required to operate the rudder, sails and balance, then C to look to port, V to look to starboard, and E to display the chart.
Keyboard play: rather slow, but this reflects the slowness of a dinghy to respond
Use of colour: reasonable, though water and land are the same colour
Graphics: fairly good
General rating: at £9.95, Yacht race represents good value for money, and is a good introduction to sailing for the novice, as well as providing interest for experienced sailors.



seems that the game would be of limited use in the classroom because of difficulties encountered in identifying the food, and the fact that the diseases are not specified. The pupils who tested this program for me quite enjoyed the arcade format, but at the end of it all, they had learned very little. The only way this game might be of value would be with a fair amount of adult intervention, so that the player would be encouraged to talk about the relationship between weight and health, and then perhaps research the diseases prevalent in the countries mentioned.

COMMENTS

Control keys: much easier to play with a joystick
Keyboard play: good
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: the types of food are not easily identifiable
General rating: fair

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A CRASH Smash

R·A·I·D O·V·E·R M·O·S·C·O·W

RAID OVER MOSCOW

Producer: **US Gold**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**

'Play it like there was no Tomorrow!' exclaims the cover of this rather grim scenario. *Raid Over Moscow* contains seven sections which take you, as a Squadron Leader of an attack flight based on a US space station on a virtual suicide mission to knock out the Soviet missile launch sites and then proceed to Moscow armed only with the weapons you can carry to destroy the Soviet defence centre.

Much of the game is linked by the Sequence 1 screen, a view of the northern hemisphere showing the States and the USSR. Here you can see missiles being launched. Pressing fire takes you into Sequence 2 — inside the space station. In this sequence you must launch your fighter craft under almost zero gravity, using reverse thrust to slow down, and guide them out of the hangar doors into space (Sequence 1 screen). If you decide to attack the Soviet launch silo, you can guide your fighter down into Soviet airspace — Sequence 3.

The attack run resembles *Zaxxon*, except that it is horizontal scrolling instead of three-quarters. You must fly low, using your shadow to assess height and angle, avoid trees. If you fly too high then radar will pick you up and Soviet heat-seeking missiles will attack from behind. But in being low you risk being hit by the ground defences. You can fire forwards to destroy ground targets and missiles. If you get through to the silos the scene cuts to....

Sequence 4. Here you are the bottom of the screen firing forwards at the the five silos. The idea is to fire through the small windows, while avoiding the Soviet fighters firing back. Destroying the central command silo will prevent the launched missiles reaching their target and let you continue on to Moscow.

Sequence 5 sees one of your men in a trench outside the Soviet defence centre (looks like the Kremlin). Targets include soldiers, tanks, towers and doors, one of which is the entrance to the reactor to be blown up in the last main sequence. Your man can fire his rocket launcher at targets while you guide fire by watching the trajectory. The reactor door is randomly selected, and once it and all the other targets have been destroyed you proceed to....

Sequence 6. Inside the reactor room there is a maintenance robot keeping the fuel cells cool — put him off his stroke and the reactor may overheat and detonate. As you cannot enter the maintenance area you must bounce disc grenades off the walls aided by a laser scope. A robot will require four hits to destroy it.

The final scene is a congratulationary one which lets you know if you have accomplished your mission.

The screen displays are varied, but below the playing area are all the necessary telltales, lives and, most importantly, time to impact of a Soviet missile fired at the States. Should this get through before you destroy the central command silo, the game will end.



World overview with space station, two parked fighters and one descending

CRITICISM

● 'I had rather mixed feelings for *Raid Over Moscow*. On one hand it's a multi-stage attack game, but on the other it is a series of very simple arcade shoot em up scenarios. The graphics were okay but not really fantastic. I had speculated that the game was going to be great, but it was not. Good, yes, but shoot em ups with slightly different scenes are not ultra-brill. More exciting graphics and a little more content in each stage would have made all the difference between good and great. Overall, I was a little disappointed.'

● *'This game is rather unusual because it's really six different games in one, rather like* Beach-Head. *Each stage does require a little arcade skill in the first few, but considerably more as the game progresses. The third stage where you have to fly your craft through the enemy's defences of various towns is rather like* **Zaxxon**, *in fact I'd go as far as to say that this stage is the best 'Zaxxon' type game for the Spectrum, which could well be a selling point to the game. The landscape scrolls very smoothly and is exceptionally detailed. This stage is action-packed with fast-moving graphics — plenty to keep your mind occupied. Moving onto the Moscow screen, you fight through a long succession of enemy land craft which constantly fire at you, where at the end you arrive at the defence centre. Destroying the centre is extremely difficult when you're being bombarded by tanks and soldiers from all*

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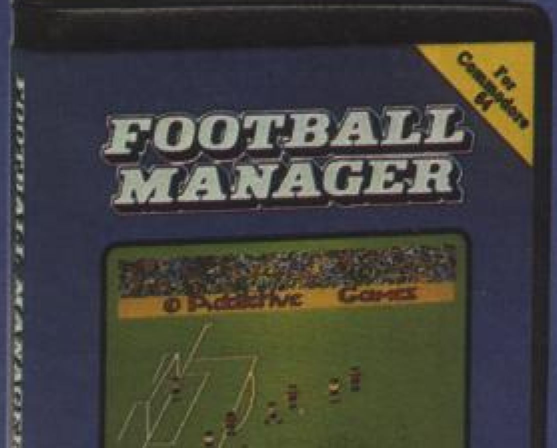
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D·E·A·T·H S·T·A·R

DEATH STAR INTER-CEPTOR



Prepare for launching!

Producer: System 3 Software
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**

The Ecyclopaedia Galactica (AD 4020 edition of course) is almost as oft-quoted a tome of learning as is its primitve forebear the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The inlay of this new game from a company new to the Spectrum has a long quote from Galactica which, in the time-honoured tradition of cassette inlays, has suitably little to do with playing the game itself. What it does tell you is that the Death Star is approaching and threatening Earth and only one hope is left. You guessed it, sucker, that's you, tucked safely inside Star Fighter One. No one needs to be told what a Death Star is in detail; it's a big, round metal moon with a deep and heavily defended equatorial trench, and a single weakness, the central core vent down which an accurately placed photon missile will be able to reach the core and blow up the Death Star.

Death Star Interceptor kicks off with a very good rendition of the 'Star wars' theme (the game is officially licenced) as your fighter waits at the base of the screen to be launched into space. There are three playing screens, the first is really an effect rather than a difficult game sequence. When the music finishes the computer says, 'Prepare for launching!' quite without the aid of a Currah Microspeech unit. You must then take off and fly the fighter through the dead centre of a series of concentric rings representing entry into hyperspace.

The second screen is set in space. Earth is seen receding on the right, leaving your fighter alone with the stars— but not for long. Some of the stars look as though they're moving, and getting bigger — and they are. Several Tie fighters and other types zoom towards you, weaving and spinning as they come into the attack. You are so busy dodging their lethal blasts and blowing them to smithereens that at first you fail to notice another star getting brighter. Suddenly the point of light grows and grows until you realise it is the dread Death Star itself. If you survive this screen until approach to the Death Star is concluded, you will dive down on the metal moon and into the equatorial

R·A·I·D O·V·E·R M·O·S·C·O·W

angles. The defence centre is large, well drawn and very colourful, also it disintegrates very nicely as your rockets explode on it. I must say that I enjoyed this game immensely, although the first few sequences become a bit trivial after a while if not irritating. Throughout the game there is constant sound and beautiful, very realistic explosions. Everything is well drawn and the 3D perspective is wonderful. A worthwhile addition to your collection if you feel up to playing this exceptionally difficult game.'

● 'Like *Beach-Head, Raid Over Moscow* offers good value in that there are several different types of shoot em up in one, including some excellent 'Zaxxon' type sequences. Arcade skills are required to survive, as well as some simple elements of strategical thinking. The bombardment of the defence centre is a sort of very souped up version of the old DK'Tronics' *3D Tanx* and it works really well — a hard little sequence. Graphically this game is accomplished, using large characters and smooth scrolling, all very clear and bright. I found *Raid Over Moscow* absorbing, addictive and fun to play. Recommended.'



Zaxxon-style 3rd screen - fighting your way to Moscow

COMMENTS

Control keys: I/P left/right, Q/Z up/down, N to fire — these are preset but they are also user-definable
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2 Cursor type
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: excellent, large, smooth, detailed and varied
Sound: continuous with spot effects
Skill levels: 3, easy to hard
Lives: 9 fighters, but depends on stopping missiles
Screens: 7
General rating: very good to excellent, mixed feelings on content, but two reviewers thought there was plenty.

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	86%
Playability	89%
Getting started	96%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	86%
Overall	**92%**

R I·N·T·E·R·C·E·P·T·O·R

trench.

Screen three is a 3D birds' eye perspective view of the trench which scrolls towards you. Your fighter can move left or right as well as up and down. The sides of the trench are dotted with laser cannon, the base with fuel dumps. More tie fighters come screaming up the trench at you, and later there are laser beams ranging across its width which you must fly under or over. If you survive this section for long enough, there will be a chance to drop a photon torpedo down the rapidly approaching vent. Success will see you fly up out of the trench, and turning round, you will see the receding Death Star disintegrate in a massive explosion. But don't worry — with one down, there are many more to come with tougher defences!

CRITICISM

● 'I saw this game some time ago on the CBM 64 (by the same company) and there isn't the slightest doubt that the Spectrum version is far superior (nothing to do with petty inter-computer jealousies either). The 'Star Wars' theme at the start is excellently done and the speech bit isn't bad either. The first screen is simple enough not to become too serious an irritation between games. The second screen is pretty amazing, a real fast shoot em up with astonishingly smooth 3D graphics that really do come rushing at you. The perspective effect and sense of depth has to be seen to be believed. In the trench the colours are perhaps less effective, but the saving grace is the speed and clarity of the scrolling. *Death Star Interceptor* (along with Incentive's *Moon Cresta*) mark a new era of sophisticated shoot em ups. Great stuff!'

● *'Death Star must be one of the fastest solid 3D shoot em up games yet available for the Spectrum. Once loaded, you are greeted with a glorious 'Star Wars' theme music — try amplifying it, it's worth it. 'Prepare for launching!' as I shot through the time gate, the computer shouted. The 3D aspect of this game is truly amazing — tiny dots rapidly grow from a distance to become Tie fighters and other recognisable shapes. The speed at which this happens is breathtaking and incredibly smooth. What's more the animation isn't (as usual) just in one plane, but they twist from side to side as they weave across the screen towards you, showing the various different angles of their metallic make up. Moving into the trench all the usual defences are plastered on the sides, which constantly impede your progress. Tie fighters zip towards you and laser barriers cause you to duck. The inlay states that the game is graphically amazing and all too often this turns out to be untrue but in this case it is an understatement. The second screen sets a new state-of-the-art standard for 3D shoot em ups. Again, I think the second screen is the most playable and enjoyable, although very difficult to get through to progress into the trench. The third screen is also extremely difficult although I didn't find it half as much fun as the previous one — still enjoyable though.* **Death Star** *is a game that will set new standards for 3D space shoot em ups. Terrific fun.'*

● 'Speed, excitement, tough gameplay and good graphics are the all-important elements of a shoot em up. *Death Star* has the lot. In the second screen the tactics of the enemy fighters gives the game an impetus rarely seen before. There are three different tactics in play. Some fighters (they all weave about like crazy) come from the distance at you, others spring off the sides of the screen unexpectedly, careering round to attack, while others actually leave the screen and then come rushing back on from 'behind' you. All the while, they are twisting and turning realistically. We have had extreme speed with *Dark Star* but little game — a good game with *Starstrike* but line graphics — now we have *Death Star Interceptor* with speed, great graphics and a playable game. This game will probably leave the 3D shoot em ups way behind until someone else comes up with a better game. The only boring part I found about this game was the first screen. Jumping into hyperspace became quite tiresome and irritating at the beginning of each new game, but then again, you have to start from somewhere. Overall, one of the best space shoot em up games in 3D ever.'



Tie fighters swarm towards you as the Death Star comes nearer

COMMENTS

Control keys: A/Q up/down (airc raft type) O/P left/right and CAPS to V to fire. These are preset, but board user-definable
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair 2, Cursor type
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: a bit limited on the trench screen, but excellent everywhere else
Graphics: amazing, fast, smooth 3D and with good explosion effects
Sound: excellent tune, spot effects
Skill levels: 3 — space cadet to commander
Lives: 3 plus shields — loss of shield with each 5 hits and there are 5 shields (you'll need em)
Screens 3
Special features: unaided speech at start
General rating; an excellent, addictive and attractive shoot em up requiring speedy reflexes. Good value for money.

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	95%
Playability	95%
Getting started	92%
Addictive qualities	88%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**92%**

Reviews

Animated Strip Poker



Producer: Knightsoft
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**

Card games on computers have always been popular with software houses, but this version of Poker has the added dimension of the seductive Mindy to play against for clothes!

The actual Poker game is a quite traditional version of five card draw. The computer (Ossie) deals you and Mindy five cards each. You then bet against each other on the drawn hand until the best are equalised, follow this by rejecting the cards in the hand you do not want in an attempt to better your hand. Then there is a final round of betting until they are equal again, at which time the hands are 'laid down' with the best hand winning. At any stage you may either STAND (do nothing with the cards), BET or FOLD (concede the hand). Recognised Poker hands are used; in descending chronological order these are Straight Flush, Four of a Kind, Full House, Flush, Straight Run, Three, Two Pairs, Pairs and Highest card.

After loading the screen presents you with a dancing card with legs, hands and head. This is Ossie, who spends a lot of time like some fairground shouter, tempting you to play with Mindy (cards that is). Pressing a key results in Ossie saying, Okay, let's play. Mindy says you'll play for her dress and she'll play for your shirt. On the left your five cards are drawn and displayed and the betting starts.

To get Mindy beginning to undress is quite hard work, since both of you start with £150 and only when that has gone will she start shedding at the rate of £50 per article. The programmer has ensured that she is reasonably well dressed, so there's quite a way to go!



After the all-action shoot em up — the first get em off game for the Spectrum

CRITICISM

● 'If they are well done, card games on a computer can be fun, especially as they offer the opportunity to a solo player to enjoy two-handed games. This one has the added spice of being strip poker, although cheating is possible as the computer obviously can not monitor your state of dress! The screen layout is clean and simple with Ossie using speech balloons to prompt the game at its various stages. Occasionally Mindy will interrupt to use the balloon with comments like 'You've just lost your shirt', or expletives of a mild manner if she loses alarge pot of money. Some of her phraseology leads me to suspect that though she may be someone's wife, Mindy is clearly no lady.

The input routine for betting and changing cards is simple, but I did feel the response speed could have been improved quite a bit. Obviously the striptease element of this game resides on how well the graphics of Mindy herself are drawn. Colour is only used on the left of the screen for the playing cards and these are perfectly adequate in detail andsize. For the rest, all is black and white. The line drawing of Mindy is about as good for its size as you could probably get on a Spectrum, and manages to make her look reasonably attractive, if a bit solid of face. More animation would have helped and should be possible, but perhaps the producers felt that this would make the program too expensive for the likely number of sales it will achieve. There is a limited market for card games on computers — this one is a good Poker implementation — it's largely a question of whether Mindy will help extra special sales.Clearly it should not be sold to juveniles over the age of eighteen, nor to Miners.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 raise/lower bets, numeric keys 1–5 for card changes
Use of colour: very simple, mostly black and white
Graphics: cards well drawn, some amusing simple animation on Mindy and Ossie, nothing stunning though
Sound: card shuffles and useful beeps
Lives: as many clothes as you can wear
General rating: a reasonable implementation of Poker, but even with the novelty of a stripping graphic, perhaps not that compulsive after a few plays.

Use of computer	68%
Graphics	67%
Playability	74%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	54%
Value for money	59%
Overall	**66%**

SOFTWARE STAR



Producer: **Addictive**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language:
BASIC/machine code

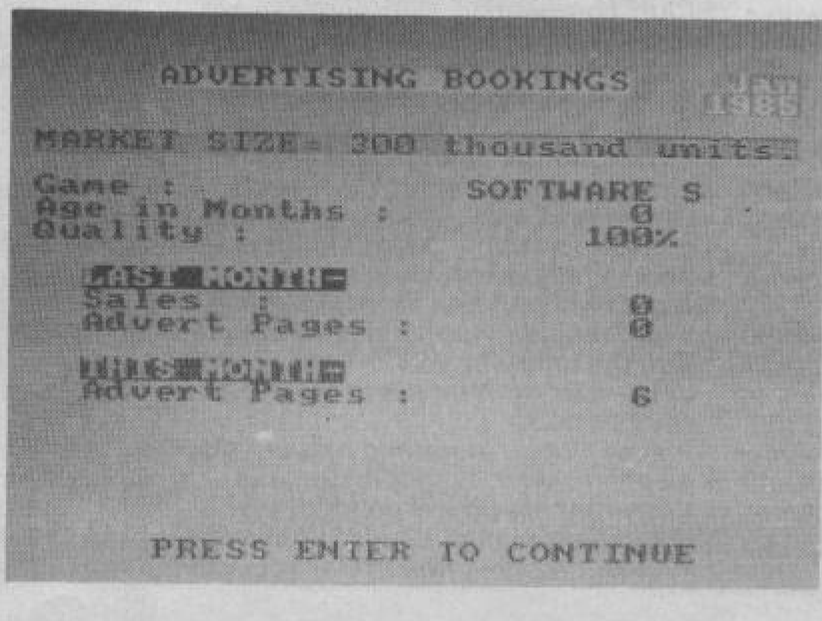
Software Star is the follow on from the hit game *Football Manager*. The object this time is to manage a software house and produce, for your board of directors, good profits and smash hits. You are informed that as Software Star's top programmer your personal ambition is to produce the most successful games program and be a software star for at least 10 months. Presumably this would then allow you to set up your own TT bike-racing team and live life up a bit. Your target for the game is to produce a pre-tax profit of £10,000.

The opening screen explains the task and gives the target set by the directors, the target always seems to be that same. To proceed you must input your name. The second page allows you to select a skill level, seven are provided, the first being 'beginner', the seventh 'genius'. The third page begins the company profile section and shows the state of the bank account, the current game on the market, listing its quality and how long it took to put it together. The program starts with the first game being called 'Software S' which took 5 months to develop but its quality is 100%. At the bottom of this page you are told how the mags received the game. In this case it was 'excellent'.

Press enter and you will be invited to launch a new game. All that's required is to type in the name of the new game. Now to the meat; we have to deal with the employees. The productivity for the last six months is summed up and this can range from appalling to excellent — more often than not the current month's productivity is rated at poor. In order to improve the the rating you can offer incentives or increase discipline. 'Sales force strategy' deals with your sales in four regions. You are asked to enter the four regions in order of priority, the first will be given a major sales push the fourth will actually experience a large sales drop. Public relations is minefield for real life software houses, in the case of *Software Star* you are given two choices. You can take a chance and use 'hype' — we have all seen how well that can work. Alternatively you can be honest and hope the public will appreciate just what a nice bunch of chaps you are!

If a game is to sell then it must be advertised, especially if you want to hype your image, so booking advertising is a feature of the game that is fraught with traps.

The most important page shows the charts. Your game will start creeping up the charts, but will it get to number one? The break even point (where your revenue is equal to the costs incurred) is shown on the screen together with the unit sales for each game. When the charts position has stablised you will be presented with a sales revenue report which simply shows the revenue gained by the month's sales. The monthly statement page shows how you incurred your costs, subtracted from the month's revenue giving your profit/loss for the month. The last figure given shows how much you have in the bank — this is rarely a pretty sight! The final page in the sequence gives your star rating which ranges from a nobody to being a software star. The period of stardom is given in months together with details of the financial picture to date. After this page you are given an opportunity to save the game, otherwise you start the long hard slog all over again, the road to riches is not always paved with Porsches, Ferraris and smart logos. Unlike life *Software Star* gives you the chance to re-wind and start again.



CRITICISM

● 'Considering that the company starts with an overdraft of £10,000 and no games on the market it seems to me that the player is cast more in the role of a Receiver than a Manager! The game is fun to play and I enjoyed naming games and trying to Hype them up through the charts. The tables, charts, and prompts are clear, easily understood and keypressing is kept to a minimum. As I played the game I realised how little influence I had over the single most important feature — the games. When a new game is launched all that was required was to give it a name, nothing more. Everything that mattered as far as the game's success was concerned, its content, design, the type of machine it was aimed at, played no part in this game. If the game was good it would have a high quality rating and would be well received by the press but there was nothing I could do to make sure that happened, it was a randomly selected event.'

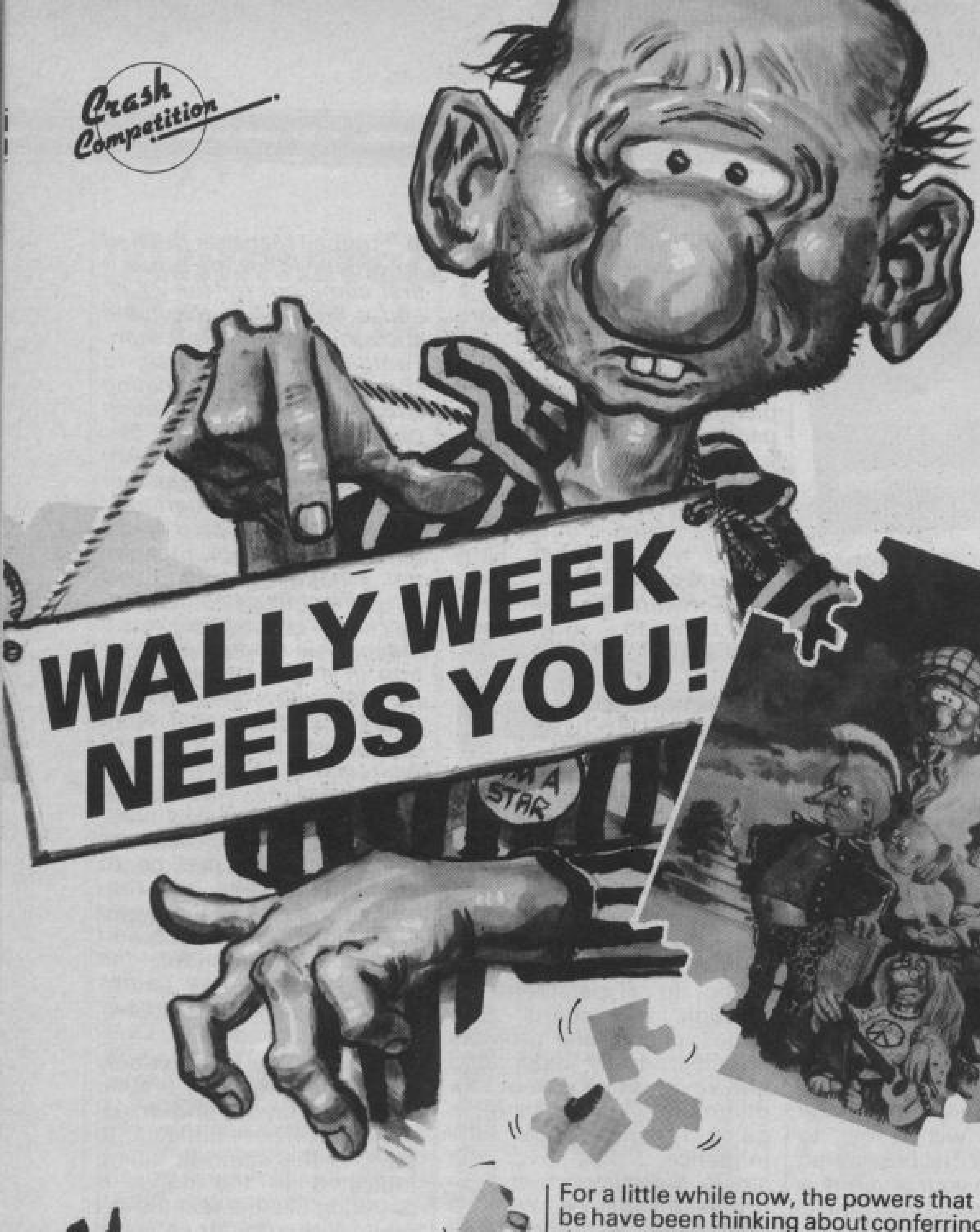
● *'Football Manager has had an ardent following since it first came out for the ZX81, and it grew when the game converted to the Spectrum. Football is, of course, a somewhat more fascinating subject to most young people than being the manager of a software house.* Football Manager *was also the first program of its now oft copied kind, whereas* Software Star *is not. I have the feeling this may affect its sales generally. However the game has a reasonable amount of variation in it and confronts the players with some realistic situations (although I don't know many software houses who could afford or have even paid as much as a £1,000 for a page of advertisement. Quite clearly, as CRASH reviews just go to show, the design and content of a game is the single most important aspect, and here the program lets the player down as the games chosen just seem to appear.'*

'*Software Star* is a text-only game. I found it rather simple in layout and actual variables, but difficult to play. If the summer slump indicated in the game is anything like the real thing, I really feel sorry for software houses. Generally, the game was mildly addictive but I don't think that at £6.95 it really represents great value for money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: appropriate keys as demanded by prompts
Keyboard play: due to extensive error checking input tends to be slow
Use of colour: most screens are very attractive
Graphics: N/A
Sound: very little and that's pretty timid
Skill levels: 7
Screens: 12 main information screens
General rating: interesting to play but the player does not have enough influence over such matters as the design of the games.

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	**N/A**
Playability	70%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	73%
Overall	**64%**



WALLY WEEK NEEDS YOU!

For Everyone who Loves to create CHAOS out of ORDER, here's an Opportunity to become Uniquely BOSSY!!



No-one can have missed the spectacular rise to superstardom enjoyed by **Wally**, Mikro-Gen's loveable but rather stupid anti-hero.

Automania was his first 'film' — where he was busy working in a car plant, making motors; *Pyjamarama* — a nightmare of a game — had the lad we all love exploring his own dreamworld. And now, the CRASH Smashed *Life of Wally* has hit the streets with the Big W joined by other members of his gang in a full-blown arcade adventure.

Life of Wally comes complete with a specially written single *Everyone's a Wally* performed by **Mike Berry**, and features Wally's wife, **Wilma** and his uncontrollable son, **Herbert**, who wanders around causing trouble wherever he goes. **Tom**, **Dick** and **Harry** also make their debut appearance in the game which is set in Wallyville (rumoured to be based on a real town a few miles from the M7).

Playing *Life of Wally* which is a multi-role arcade adventure is straight-forward enough, but the overall objective of the game — to collect the combination to the Bank's safe so you can open it and pay the gang — is a little more tricky. Hours of amusement are to be had, controlling the various members of Wally's gang.

For a little while now, the powers that be have been thinking about conferring the ultimate accolade on Wally's shoulders. As a true Superstar, should he not have a fan club? **Well, it's up to you**, the Wally fans of the world, to write and campaign for one!

We've had a chat with Wally's management company and a deal is currently being set up which will lead to the formation of an official **Wally Fan Club**. This could, at last, establish Wally as a true personality, raunchier than any rodent you might care to mention, more popular than any pop star, mightier than any menace. . . .

Wally's manager (all stars need them) has asked us to run a 'Wally Fan Club' competition. With sponsorship from Wally's software people (Mikro-Gen), a totally unique first prize is up for grabs — a specially commissioned jigsaw is being made, using **Oliver Frey**'s artwork for the March CRASH cover — (without any of the words). Only one of these jigsaws, but out of plywood not cardboard ('Only the best', Wally demanded, 'only the best.') will be made. And Oli's going to sign this jigsaw, so it's doubly unique! And the only way you've got a chance to lay your mitts on it is to enter the competition.

A few Wally mugs and hats will also be given away, as spot prizes, and thirty runners-up will get a copy of Mikro-Gen's latest piece of Wallyware — *Life of Wally* — which retails at £9.95.

So how do you enter? Well, imagine you're the secretary of the newly formed **Official Wally Week Fan Club** and have been asked to set it up. Decide what you would put in the special 'Wally Pack' that you're going to send out to all new members when they join, and don't forget you've got to tell them what kind of Wally goodies they can buy — like T shirts etc — now they've joined the club. Are you going to run a regular newsletter, with interviews with Wally and the Gang — if so, what else are you going to put in it? Will you try and persuade Mikro-Gen to offer Wally games at a members' discount?

Think about all these things — and dream up a few ideas of your own, then send us details of what your 'Wally Pack' would contain — draw up a poster of Wally if you're going to include one in the real pack; include a list of the kind of Wally Goodies that you plan to offer to members — let your imagination run riot! You could even write an article for Issue 1 of the 'Weekly News', official Club Journal — perhaps a short story or an interview with one of the gang. Have fun and send us your Wally Pack to **'WALLY COMPETITION', PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive by first post **April 25th**. (Don't forget to add your own name and address.) The winner will be the person who, in the opinion of Wally's Manager, has sent in the best suggestions on how the **Official Wally Fan Club** should serve its members. 30 runners-up will win copies of *Life of Wally* with a few spot prizes of Wally mugs and hats for individual posters, newsletter articles or lists of Wallyrabilia etc. And all entrants will have their names and addresses put to one side and looked after lovingly by Wally's manager — they will become founder members of the Club when Wally's manager comes back from his holiday in the Bahamas — lucky fellow!

THE WORDS YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR, LISTS AND LISTS OF LUCKY PRIZEWINNERS

We're nearly up to date now apart from the Avalon, Knight Lore and Underwurlde map competitions which are still being judged as we go to press. And if you want to know what has happened to the Leonardo competition, please look in the news pages.

WINNERS OF THE GILSOFT COMPETITION (XMAS)
J Clarke, Stevenage, Herts; Andrew Smith, Swinton, S Yorks; Mark Drackford, Braintree, Essex; M Jenkins, Hinton, Hereford; M Kesterton, Chapel Allerton, Leeds; M Kearton-Smith, Shawforth, Nr Rochdale; James Lewis, Eastcote, Middlesex; Mrs J Peckham, Romsley, Hants; W P Riggs, Welwyn Garden City, Herts; Jarl Smidt-Olsen, Cannon Hill, London.

WINNERS OF THE TURMOIL COMPETITION (XMAS)
The occupier, 75 Dale View Avenue, Chingford, London; Weng Ang, London NW2; Timothy Askew, Chew Magna, Bristol; Paul Atkin, Hull; Mr D Atkinson, Sacriston, Durham; Raymond Barry, Crofton, Wakefield; C Beale, Formby, Merseyside; Paul Beales, Dersingham, King's Lynn; Mr G Bell, Huntingdon, Cambs; Ian Bell, Birkenhead, Merseyside; Ian Bell, Sheffield; Justin S Benn, Cricklewood, London; Nick Berry, Evesham, Worcs; Gary Booker, Willingdon, Eastbourne; Rhodri Bowden, Petersfield, Hampshire; Chris Bowler, Barrow-on Trent, Derby; T Brookman, Knutsford, Cheshire; L Brown, Belfast; Neil Brownlee, Tweedbank, Galashields, Scotland; J W Bryant, Kingsbridge, South Devon; L Burton, Billericay, Essex; Neil Cane, Harrow, Middlesex; Jonathan Chadwick, Whaley Bridge, Stockport; D Colclough, Parkhall, Stoke-on-Trent; Dean Connolly, Downpatrick, County Down, Northern Ireland; Marcus Cooper, Bromsgrove, Worcs; Sean Crossan, Cambridge; Ronald Culhane, Portmarnock, County Dublin; P Cummings, Marlborough, Wiltshire; Andrew Cunnah, St Asaph, Clwyd; J Daley, Deer Park, Plymouth; Paul A Deehan, Farringdon, Tyne & Wear; Matthew Drycz, Rochdale, Lancs; R K Eccleston, Preston, Lancs; Grahame Edger, Chester-le-Street, County Durham; D K Farrow, East Tilbury, Essex; Damian Gilheaney, Keresley, Coventry; Tony Giscombe, Letchworth, Herts; Danny Goldsmith, Braintree, Essex; Andrew Green, Oakworth, Keighly; Stephen Hammond, Gravesend, Kent; Timmy Hau, Southfields, London; Ian Hargreaves, Fleetwood, Lancs; R Harvey, Solihull, West Midlands; A M Hirst, Thornhill, Dewsbury; N A Hooper, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands; J Horne, Wembley, Middlesex; Simon Howcroft, Barnsley, South Yorks; D Hughes, Cheltenham, Glos; David Hurst, Castleford, West Yorks; S Hussain, Rusholme, Manchester; Mark Ide, Rye, East Sussex; Scott Jones, Burley-in-Wharledale, West Yorks; Mrs L Lane, Hazelmere, Bucks; H W Lee, Poplar, London; David Legg, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham; S Lewington, Chalford Hill, Stroud, Glos; Andrew McCandless, Woolston, Warrington; Richard MacGonigal, Southampton; James McMollen, Douglas, County Cork; Marie McNally, Caversham, Reading; Chun Po Man, London, WC2; Ehab Mina, Oadby, Leicester; Chris Moss, Marks Tey, Essex; Sunil Nagpal, Stone, Kent; James Oakenfold, Ringwood, Hants; M Oxley, Gloucester; S Palmer, London E3; Alec Panayi, Harrow, Middlesex; Derek Partridge, Cheltenham, Glos; Sanjay Patel, Walsall, West Midlands; Neil Pearson, Knaphill, Surrey; Geoff Peerless, Steyning, West Sussex; K J Piper, Camberley, Surrey; Evan Pratt, Cheltenham; Ian Proudfoot, Chichester, West Sussex; Philip Race, North Yorks; A Reynolds, Redditch, Worcs; Michael Robinson, Swansea; G Robinson, Hunmanby, North Yorks; Paul Rock, Harrogate; S T Roper, Gedling, Notts; David Scott, Hatfield, Herts; Mark Scott, Newquay, Cornwall; Dean Scrutton, Aintree, Merseyside; P Sellick, Abingdon, Oxon; Ken Sigley, Great Wyrley, Walsall; P Singh, Stafford; Kevin Spear, Lincoln; D B Stanifortgh, Stocksbridge, Sheffield; Simon Stokes, Erdington, Birmingham; Ben Taylor, Nailsworth, Glos; A Thomassen, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex; Michael Tinson, Pershore, Worcs; Phillip Tunney, Milton Keynes; Neil Unitt, Wolverhampton; Alan Walker, Stretford, Manchester; K Wilkinson, Mirfield, West Yorks; M Wilson, Olton, Solihull, W Midlands; Jonathan Wollny, Woking, Surrey.

WINNER OF THE FIREBIRD COMPETITION (XMAS) WAS: B James, Redland, Bristol 6
WITH: 'Beautifully packaged to make you BYTE, BITTEN you buy but often regret it. It's CRAZY, CAVERNS full of software and aggresive assistants, — I recall one who resembled Dracula's grandfather, I'd removed the inlay looking for a screen dump when, — Ok, 'MISTER, FREEZE' he growled, I dropped the tape, all I could think of was RUN, BABY RUN, — TERRA FORCEd me to make a rapid EXODUS. Now we go together and they say we're THE WILD BUNCH, a MENACE, — they treat us as if we're VIKING RAIDERS after BOOTY but we get to try before we buy.

RUNNERS UP:
Stephen Bell, Ponteland, Northumberland; Robert Cameron, West Clandon, Surrey; Miss M Griffiths, Poole, Dorset; John Minson, Muswell Hill, London; Ian Muir, Cramlington, Northumberland;

SILVERSOFT COMPETITION (XMAS)
WINNER: Mrs Beryl Paulls, Hull
2nd: M Usher, Offerton, Stockport
RUNNERS UP: Richard Anderson, Belfast; Derrick Austin, Haxby, York; Richard Batchelor, Weston, Suffolk; Paul Bennett, Bolton, Lancs; Graham Bentley, Thirsk, N Yorks; Andrew Bettany, Tang Hall, York; D Birch, Harlow, Essex; David Blair, Rutherglen, Glasgow; P O Blenkinsop, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands; Dennis Blyth, Blackpool; Russell Bodey, Arnold, Nottingham; Jonathan Braman, South Chailey, E Sussex; David Brown, Hounslow, Middlesex; L Brown, Belfast; Lee Brown, Forest Gate, London; Robert Burgess, Rotherham, S Yorks; D Carroll, Hull; Nigel Cummings, West Bromwich, W Midlands; Mark Davidson, Penicuik, Lothian; Christopher Davy, Epping, Essex; Philip Day, Grimsby, S Humberside; W R de Kler, The Hague, Holland; Mark Ellis, Athlone, County Westmeath; Simon Ellis, Frith, Clwyd; T Fisher, Horley, Surrey; C Francis, Bewfleet, Essex; Paul Fulcher, Ashill, Norfolk; S J Galloway, Castle Bytham, Lincs; Adam Gill, Alkrington, Manchester; Jason Goddard, Solihull, W Midlands; Danny Goldsmith, Braintree, Essex; N Goodman, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent; Ian Green, Sheffield; John Green, Toddington, Beds; M Griffiths, Poole, Dorset; Steven Grove, Witney, Hants; John Hallas, Alwoodley, Leeds; Robert Halliday, Cheam, Surrey; Saul Hambling, Tewkesbury, Glos; J Harvey, Breaston, Derby; Robert J Head, Ipswich, Suffolk; Robert Herbert, Garstang, Lancs; Andrew Higginson, Isleworth, Middlesex; Anthony Holme, Derby; Kevin Howson, Kendal, Cumbria; Ian Hunt, Purley, Surrey; Bill Ip, Redditch, Worcs; Steven Kearton, Cumbernauld, Glasgow; S Kendall, Ossett, W Yorks; M Kesterton, Chapel Allerton, Leeds; J D Kidd, Grt Clacton, Essex; Richard Landells, Raunds, Northants; P Lauff, Rothwell, Northants; Anthony le May, Sidcup, Kent; David Linsley, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; G R McCready, West Bridgeford, Nottingham; G McClory, Congleton, Cheshire; Glenn McDowall, Salisbury; Stuart McFarlane, Glasgow; Barry McKeown, Hamilton, Strathclyde; James McMullen, Douglas, County Cork; Anthony M Main, Morpeth, Northumberland; S W Meale, Hoddesdon, Herts; John Minson, Muswell Hill, London; S G Mitchell, Basingstoke, Hants; G J Morris, Folkestone, Kent; J A Morrison, Elswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; David Muller, Norwich, Norfolk; Eric Nelson, Farndon, Chester; Matthew Nobbs, Norwich; Philip Nutman, Weymouth, Dorset; Dafydd O'Conner, Aberystwyth, Dyfed; Matthew Olden, Tolnhill Park, Southampton; N H Oughton, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos; Andrew Peck, Doncaster, S Yorks; Gordon Peterkin, Stapleford, Nottingham; Steven Peters, Deptford, London; Leigh Roberts, Kidderminster, Worcs; Neil Ross, Larbert, Stirlingshire; Justin Richards, Bromsgrove, Worcs; David Scott, Hatfield, Herts; Simon Scott, Wool, Dorset; Stephen Sheppard, Lakenham, Norfolk; Hanpal Singh, Trench, Shropshire; John Slater, Warwick; Andrew Stocker, Southport, Merseyside; Andrew Strong, Kinsham, Glos; Antony Spencer, Chesterfield, Derbyshire; Sean Sumner, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands; Paul Taylor, Hersham, Surrey; Wayne Thirwell, Ryhope, Tyne & Wear; C F Tilley, London, W14; Marihe Tungeruis, Heemstede, Holland; P Waldock, Tottenham, London; J Walsh, Knotty Ash, Liverpool; Stephen Walton, Dewsbury, W Yorks; Tony Watson, North Finchley, London; Michael Wilkinson, Penarth, South Glamorgan; John Winch, Hoo, Kent; Chi-Wan Yau, London, NW1; Mark Yorath, Chilwell, Notts.

WINNERS OF CCS COMPETITION (XMAS)
Munawwar Ahmad, Hounslow; K Alexander, Morden, Surrey; Wayne Armstrong, Bristol; Craig Bacon, Rotherham; Vincent Badger, Wolverhampton; Grant Ball, Feltham, Middlesex; Steven Barker, Rotherham; Steven Bartlett, Preston; David Bates, Solihull; F A Beale, Blandford, Dorset; James Belcher, Warley, W Midlands; Paul Boak, Barking, Essex; Andrew Bond, Elstead, Godalming; Andrew Boorman, Rainham, Kent; Neil Bucknall, Hightown, W Yorks; Mark Cairns, Ashington, Northumberland; James Clark, Cornwall; Derek Cooke, Stevenage, Herts; Lee Cornell, Bromley, Kent; Stephen Cornwell, Pontefract, W Yorks; Terence Croker, Colchester; Mrs Liz Cutbertson, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear; Peter Dabbs, Wednesbury, W Midlands; M Dawson, Ross-Shire; H A J L de Roos, ScHagen, HOLLAND; Graham Dixon, Aldershot; Ian Doyle, Runcorn, Cheshire; Mark Dryden, Rickmansworth, Herts; Chris Ellerton, Tunbridge, Kent; Paul Elliott, Amersham, Bucks; Michael Ferris, Derry, N.I; David H Goodyear, Bradford, W Yorks; Scott Graham, Milton Keynes; Paul Granger, Greenford, Middlesex; James Grimwood, Rayleigh, Essex; Stuart Hamilton, Barking, Essex; Warren Hamilton, Enniskillen, N.I; Ian Harcombe, Liverpool; Stephen Harper, Glasgow; Gary Harris, Oxford; Jan Heerema, Denhaag, HOLLAND; C M Hewish, Sydenham, London; J A Hilson, Preston, Lancs; Christopher Holding, Stockport; Miss Alison Holmes, Retford, Notts; Gary Hook, Hillingdon, Middlesex; Phillip Howes, March, Cambs; I M Hughes, Banbury, Oxon; Julian Hull, Taunton, Somerset; Zamir Hyder, Croydon, Surrey; Franco Iannelli, London N20; David A Jackson, Choppinton, Northumberland; Miss Debbie Jarrett, Redditch, Worcs; Tony Jordan, Kent; M W Kemp, Biggin Hill, Kent; J E Kneen, Isle of Man; D Lambert, Beighton, Sheffield; Danny Lek, Denhaag, HOLLAND; Kenson Low, Wembley, London; D McClelland, Hartlepool; Brian McKie, Stewarton, Scotland; A J Markham, Hopton on Sea; Gerald Marriott, Gloucester; Lee Meaden, Beeston, Notts; Alyn Mulholland, Calverton, Notts; G Newton, Ilkeston, Derby; K J Osgun, Allerton, Liverpool; Richard Parker, Newent, Glos; Miss M Penfold, Bolsover; Ian Percival, Macclesfield; Jonathan Poxon, Hucknall, Notts; A Prior, Woking, Surrey; Neil Ross, Stirlingshire; N E Salt, Crayford, Kent; Carl Saxton, Askern, Doncaster; Paul Sharpe, Purley, Surrey; Miss Karen Shaw, Kidderminster; Ian Shillam, Sheffield; Lee Shuttlewood, Takeley, Essex; Scott Sinclair, Ayrshire; Darrell Smith, Doncaster, S Yorks; Roger Smith, Maldon, Essex; Paul Southworth, Preston, Lancs; M Starks, Weston-super-Mare; B C Steele, West Drayton; Paul Sutton, Whitleigh, Devon; Nicholas Turner, Halesowen, W Midlands; Miss Gillian Urquhart, Aberdeen; Ian Wagstaff, Purley, Surrey; A Walker, Desford, Leicester; Craig Watson, Bedale, N Yorks; T Watson, Petworth, W Sussex; Steve Watt, Worthing, W Sussex; Jason Paul Westlake, Christchurch, Dorset; R A Weston, Crowborough, Sussex; Andrew Wigman, Christchurch, Dorset; Simon Wood, Bradford; A Wright, Lymington, Hants; Mark V Wright, Solihull, W Midlands; Michael Yallop, Norwich.

WINNERS OF THE FREL COMCON COMPETITION (XMAS)
John Green, Toddington; Ian Hudson, Alrewas, Staffs; A McIlvenna, Thornton Heath, Surrey; Alan Ockerby, Eccleshill, W Yorks; Rickie Wells, Wellingborough, Northants.

WINNERS OF STARSTRIKE (XMAS)
?, Edmonton, London; ?, Whittington, Nr Oswestry, Shropshire; Junaid Ahmed, North Acton, London; R Alberici, Finchley, London; Noaman Ali, London; P Atherton, Grimsby, S Humberside; A Bailey, Carshalton, Surrey; Marc Baker, Croydon, Surrey; J K, Barton-Hanson, Nuthall, Notts; Colin Bates, Skelmersdale, Lancs; Paul Beales, Kings Lynn, Norfolk; Paul Berry, Ossett, W Yorks; Simon Bessant, Bracknell, Berks; Iqbal Bhathal, Hounslow, Middlesex; Martin Black, Hexham, Northumberland; Russell Bodey, Arnold, Nottingham; Stuart Boys, Evesham, Worcs; Andrew Britchford, Rushden, Northants; Michael Budden, Cheam, Surrey; Neil Bysouth, Letchworth, Herts; Murdo Campbell, Isle of Lewis, Scotland; N Cansdale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs; Steven Cheung, Douglas, Isle of Man; Stephen Cornwell, Pontefract, W Yorks; Nigel Cummings, West Bromwich, W Midlands; Graham Ellis, Malvern Wells, Worcs; Marc Fanciullacci, Ickenham, Middlesex; Paul Ferguson, Huntington, York; Neil Fisher, Palmers Green, London; Martin Frizzell, Craigavon, Co Armagh; Darrell Garvin, Coleraine, Co Londonderry; Jonathan Gill, Beckenham, Kent; Stephen Hahm, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear; Robert Hardiman, Reading, Berks; David Harrow, Hertford, Herts; I Hart, Thornborough, Buckingham; Andrew Hay, Blackpool, Lancs; John Hines, West Wellow, Hants; Robert Hornsey, Arnold, Notts; Tony Instone, Bridgnorth, Shropshire; P Jeffries, Small Heath, Birmingham; A D Jones, Havant, Hants; Geraint Jones, Taunton, Somerset; Jason Kane, Kirkintilloch, Scotland; Andrew Kitson, Pagham, West Sussex; R Lane, Wednesfield, W Midlands; Anthony Lerlay, Sidcup, Kent; Stephen Lincoln, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex; Raphael Lyne, Oxford; G N McCann-Moon, Fulwood, Lancs; Simon McCarroll, Wirral, Merseyside; Stuart McFarlane, Glasgow; Julian Matthews, Newton Farm, Hereford; D W May, Chiswick, London; Alan Metcalfe, Gosport, Hants; Mrs C Moore, Intake, Sheffield; David Moritz, Harrow, Middlesex; G J Morris, Folkestone, Kent; Stephen Mooris, Friar Park, Wednesbury; Bruce Murray, Edinburgh; Graham Neale, Reading, Berks; Michael O'Connor, Dublin; Karen Orr, Bradford, W Yorks; Matthew Parselle, Wilmslow, Cheshire; Adrian Patto, Ash, Hants; Anthony Philipson, London; Mrs P A Pilkington, Falmouth, Cornwall; David Povey, Co Down, N Ireland; Colin Reekie, St Monans, Fife; Michael Robinson, Derwen Fawr, Swansea; Adrian Samler, Didcot, Oxon; Nick Sansom, Leominster, Herefordshire; Farley Scollick, Egham, Surrey; James Maxwell Scott, Wimbledon, London; Henry Shades, Glasgow; J Shayler, Beaconsfield, Bucks; Darren Sims, Orpington, Kent; Mark Slater, Hatfield, Herts; Adrian Smith, Gosport, Hants; R Smith, Ealing, London; G P Stables, Swinton, S Yorks; Jason Stanford, Halesowen, W Midlands; B C Steele, West Drayton, Middlesex; Andrew Stocker, Southport, Merseyside; E Sysom, Spalding, Lincs; Andrew Talby, Peterborough, Cambs; Sean Tapper, Salisbury, Wilts; John Taylor, Consett, Co Durham; B Templeton, Ealing, London; David Thomas, Northolt, Middlesex; Christopher Tong, Sapcote, Leics; Adrian White, Norbury, London; Andrew Wigman, Christchurch, Dorset; Michael Wilkinson, Penarth, S Glamorgan; Richard Williams, Rhyl, Clwyd; David Winteringham, Hinley, Leics; Andrew Wood, Spennymoor, Co Durham; P Wood, Godalming, Surrey; Stefan Wood, Greenford, Middlesex; Simon Wylam, Old Heathfield, E Sussex.

WINNERS OF MATCHDAY COMPETITION (XMAS)
Miss N Adrani, London; J Axtell, Mapperley, Nottingham; Gareth Barker, Holywell, Clwyd; Dennis Blyth, Blackpool, Lancs; Michael Bowditch, Yeovil, Somerset;

WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS

Graham Brown, Newbiggin-by-Sea, Northumberland; D Carroll, Hull; J Clarke, Stevenage, Herts; S Daly, Harlow, Essex; A L Davies, Neath, W Glamorgan; Ryan Davis, Longford, Middlesex; Chris Emblem, Wakefield, W Yorks; Gareth Evans, Penylan, Cardiff; Andrew Fox, Stockport, Cheshire; Michael Gate, Swanage, Dorset; Andrew Hallett, Kirkstall, Leeds; I Hart, Thornborough, Bucks; Lee Hathaway, Calverton, Nottingham; R Heath, Rayleigh, Essex; J Heathfield, London; Andrew Hilditch, Warrington, Cheshire; Laurence Hoff, Four Marks, Hants; Michael Jones, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield; Richard Kilcline, Malvern, Worcs; Paul Ledger, Crescent, Leeds; N Leadbeater, Yardley, Birmingham; Alistair Lilley, Selton, Notts; Richard Lione, Hornchurch, Essex; Stephen Longworth, Solihull, W Midlands; Simon Lyons, Scawby, S Humberside; Damien McElvenny, Eccles, Manchester; Kevin McKeown, Co Tyrone; Stephen Marriott, New Duston, Northants; Mark Moore, Castle Vale, Birmingham; Phillip Morris, Birmingham; Chris Pullen, Nr Lewes, E Sussex; Paul Reynolds, Wellington, Somerset; Martin Roach, Kingswinford, W Midlands; Toby Roberts, Wrexham, Clwyd; Andrew Robertson, Enfield; Paul Saunders, Gosport, Hants; Mrs N Scarlett, Basingstoke, Hants; P Simpson, Shrewton, Wilts; Peter Simpson, Warminster, Wilts; Paul Tagg, Hertford, Herts; Chris Thomas, Upton, Chester; Ian Vincent, Mansfield, Notts; Barry Whiting, Bangor, Gwynedd; M White, West Addebury, Oxon; Stefan Wood, Perivale, Middlesex.

WINNERS OF THE KET TRILOGY COMPETITION (XMAS)

Miss Nadrani, London N14; Richard Archer, Walsall, W Midlands; G Barnett, Stourbridge,W Midlands; Jason Bahon, Maidenhead, Berkshire; WDR Benoy, Bury St.Edmonds, Suffolk; Mrs TM Britton, Llantwit Major, S Glam; JE Burfield, Hanley Swan, Worcester; Ian Craddock, Cannock, Staffs; Roger Davie, Dereham, Norfolk; Malcom Dixon, Waltham Cross, Herts; A Dixon, Hull; K Earley, E Croyden, Surrey; Steven Forster, Stanley, Co Durham; Danial Foxman, London; Alan Gough, Mythe, Hants; I Gregory, Oxford; SD Galliford, Luton, Beds; Robert Hardcastle, Liverpool; David Hill, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs; Barry Milton, Polegate, E Sussex; Peter Hooper, Banbury, Oxon; Mathew Jubb, Stockport; Collin Kaye, Huddersfield; James Lord, Penrith, Cumbria; Wayne McKenna, Sale, Cheshire; Kevin McKeown, Co Tyrone, N Ireland; Peter Millan, Greyabbey, N Ireland; John Minson, London N10; S Nickholls, Gedling, Notts; Brian Osmand, Weymouth, Dorset; M Oxley, Gloucester; Simon Proudman, Brislington, Bristol; Ewn Robertson, Largs, Ayreshire; Lewis Rossat, Clevedon, Avon; Ian Savage, Telford, Shropshire; David Scott, Hatfield, Herts; Miss Jamie Sayer, Kings Lynn, Norfolk; Paul Serbert, Harrogate; Andrew Smallman, Doune, Perthshire; Duncan Smith, Stourbridge, W Midlands; FA Soloman, Brentwood, Essex; Stefan Suri, Cheylesmore, Coventry; Alistair Taylor, Milngavie, Glasgow; Andrew Tricker, Woodbridge, Suffolk; Simon Ward, Lewes, E Sussex; Stephen Webber, Eastleigh, Hampshire; M White, Banbury, Oxon; Matthew Williams, Headington, Oxford.





VOTING FOR THE ADVENTURE CHART

The CRASH Adventure Chart has picked up considerably since we first introduced it, with more and more votes coming in every day! To make life easier for sorting, we are now providing a separate write-in form, so please use it for the Adventure Chart, and not the one included at the bottom of the Hotline details. If you are voting on both charts, you may send both forms together in the same envelope of course.

How to register your votes

There seems to have been some confusion in the minds of voters for the Adventure Chart, so to clarify the situations, here's how we do it. You may vote for **as many titles as you wish** (not just five as in the Hotline Chart) and you may award any of them points out of ten. So, for instance, you might vote for seven titles giving each of them ten points if you think they are worth it, or only three and give them one each. These votes are then added up for each title and the total is divided by the number of people who voted for the program resulting in an aggregate figure. From these figures, the top thirty adventure games are taken in descending order.

Phoned-in votes are accepted over the Hotline **(0584 3015)** in the same way (please state that you are voting for the Adventure Chart at the beginning), and may also be written in letter form without the use of the coupon if you prefer.

Adventure Chart Prize Draw

And don't forget that, like the Hotline Chart, you can win prizes! Each month we draw a winner from the voters, who receives £40 worth of software and a CRASH T-shirt, with four runners-up each getting a T-shirt and a mini-subscription to CRASH for three months.

ADVENTURE CHART COUPON

Remember – points out of ten for as many titles as you wish.

Name ....

Address ....

....

postcode

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My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
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2	
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5	


ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
OUR HERO, THINKING THAT THE FABULOUS EYE OF OKTUP (WHICH CAN SEE INTO THE FUTURE) IS JUST A MINI-VIDEO PLAYER, HAS CRASHED HIS SHIP AND BEEN TAKEN AS A PET BY A DAFT UMPHALUMP! ALSO, IT GOT THE EYE!
ME GOTTUM PET! ME HAPPEE!
UMPA LUMPA LUMPA LUM...
HOPPITTY SKIP
HEY! THAT WAZZOCK'S RUN OFF WITH MY LOONY! I WUS GOIN' EAT THAT LOONY! WE GOTTA GET MY LOONY BACK!
ALSO MY EYE!
SNUKKA SNUKKA SNURK
ER... WHOSSAT THING OVER THERE GOIN' "SNUK"...
...AN' WHOSSIT DOIN' WITH THE WRECKAGE OF OUR SHIP?
SNURK!
SNUK!
WOW
OH, THAT'S A STAMPER BIRD!
THEY CALL IT THAT 'COS IT INVENTS THINGS, AN' THEN IT GOES....
BANG
WHOP
DING
SNOKA DOODLE SNUUUURK
STAMP STAMP
WONDER WHAT IT TASTES LIKE!
BLERK
TUK-TUK-TUK-TUK
MEANWHILE... THE UMPHALUMP IS USING THE EYE OF OKTUP TO LOOK INTO THE FUTURE AGAIN...
SAAY! MEBBE WE COULD SWAP THIS DOOHICKY FOR YOUR LOONY AN' MY EYE!
FOOD FOOD FOOD
WOW!
HECK! IT'S RUNNING THE BATTERIES DOWN IN MY MINI-VIDEO!
WHERE'S MY TRUSTY OL' GUN!
GOODY! DIS PET BELONGUM ME GOIN' FETCHUM ME PLENTEE GUT STUFFUM!
BLEAT!
HEY, OH MIGHTY UMPHALUMP! WOULD YOU CARE TO SWAP THAT GROTTY BAUBLE AND THAT LOONY FOR THIS HERE T'RIFFIC MECHANICAL DOOHICKY? EH?
G'BYE!
BOOM
WOW! HE JUS' KILT THE UMPHALUMP WITH THAT OL' BANG-STICK!
WOW!
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE STUCK WITH THE DOOHICKY!
LATER..
FOOD-FOOD-FOOD
COME AN' GET YOUR UMPHALUMP STEAKS!
HO!
HO!
LATER LATER...
BOY! THAT WAS SCRUMMY! WONDER WHAT I CAN HAVE FOR 'AFTERS'!
I KNOW WHAT I'M HAVIN'...
HAH!
EEE! WILL JETMAN'S MONSTER FINALY LAY THE MOLARS ON HIM? WILL OKTUP GET HIS EYE BACK?... DID NELSON?!... NEX' MUNF, EH?



FRONT

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT AT THE FRONT
ANGUS RYALL

AAAARGH! Shows, Shows, Shows! I think I have gone off exhibitions. There's probably a lot of stuff about the LET show elsewhere in this issue *(too right —ED)*, **but well, what would life be like without me throwing in my ha'porth?**

The art of the exhibition is to stand around looking meaningful and authoritative (buyers for big shop chains tend to be far better at this than exhibitors, unfortuately) and thereby cadge as many drinks as possible off the assembled journalists, foreign buyers, advertising executives and sundry other lackies. Naturally, in the course of doing one's business (ie selling the product) one has to buy quite a few drinks for the same lackies; in fact the really seasoned and professional exhibitors cut out all the extraneous hassle by keeping large quantities of booze on their stand at all times — I mean, walking to the bar can be such a draaag. . . .

All in all, though, this show seemed remarkably flat, especially compared with the PCW show in the Autumn. Perhaps it's just that you always get much more pzazz at a public show than at a trade one, but it did seem to me that there was precious little new stuff around at all, and what was there was hardly revolutionary. One or two notable exceptions were Ocean's *Gift from the Gods* and Beyond's *Shadowfire*, both of which were written by **Denton Designs** — now how come these people never produced anything classy while they were at Imagine?

Also getting its first public airing was *Gyron* from Firebird, which looked very impressive — well worth the CRASH Smash it received last month. There was not a lot of strategy games to look at though, and one story that emerged at the show was that of Lothlorien signing up to do a game or two for Quicksilva. I know I've not always been kind to Lothlorien, but at least they do try and create games that do more than just improve your wrist action. Perhaps with Quicksilva giving them a nudge in the commercial direction, they may start really showing us what they can do.

Realtime Software, who so far as I could make out are three beer-gutted, cider-swilling, bearded heavy metal lovers, spent a lot of time demonstrating their extremely tedious game *3D Starstrike* which they have just converted for the cataleptic Enterprise computer. As I approached to ask them what they thought of 'Star Fleet Battles' I was hustled away by a bevy of Enterprise salesmen — I wouldn't have minded that they nailed my feet to the floor and forced me to watch their forthcoming TV commercial 84 times, but I'm still waiting for my official Enterprise track suit to pop through my mailbox. Any chance of it boys? Or will I have to compare your machine with the Spectrum first?

On limping downstairs I was very pleased to discover the Ludlow mafia handing out traditional Shropshire hospitality, ie gin, from the CRASH stand in the corner. The stand was (am I being biased here?) really the only decent thing on the ground floor.

A last thought on the LET show: the biggest computer game company in Britain (and probably the world) was not there. No, I'm not talking about the Inland revenue, I'm talking about Ultimate, who never sully their hands with these show things. Would they have gained any business by being there, and did they lose any because they weren't? I doubt it. Once again, it looks as though Ultimate know something that the rest are only just finding out — that exhibitions are, for the most part, just an excuse for a binge, and that there are far more effective ways for companies to spend money on promotion. Think about that next time you buy a game — how much of your hard-earned cash is going towards some marketing executive's exhibition blowout! Oh, and I almost forgot, many thanks to the wonderful Dutch people on the stand next to me, who kept me going with regular supply of Pils, a couple of barrels of which they had the foresight to bring with them.

Well that's got all the exhibition stuff out of the way, unless you want to hear about this Sinclair QL Trade day *(No, we don't -ED)* — I'm sure you don't want to hear about it, actually, but I'll tell you anyway. *(Please, no. . . .)* It was full of some of the snottiest, most self-congratulating, jumped-up breadheads in the business, all discussing how this program was going to work out the movements of their shares, write the SUN leader column and assassinate Arthur Scargill before breakfast. One chap (who shall remain nameless because he works for a major psoftware house) particularly got up my nose — he said, 'How do you find developing software on the QL? Tricky? Ya, well we use a VAX for all our work you know.' (A VAX being a £30,000 mainframe)

I pointed out to this revisionist jackal that most of the best games software was actually written on the machine which it was intended to run on, and that game software authors were used to working with the idiosyncrasies of various machines, and indeed managed often to exploit those idiosyncrasies. In fact, the only software house to go in for writing on bigger machines than the intended end-user was, you guessed it, Imagine!

Enough of all this; let's move on to the really important stuff *(at last -ED)*, like whether my loo has thawed out yet *(AAAARGH! ——)* and my plan to build an ornamental shopping centre in my back yard out of broken bricks. Maybe I could sell part of the yard to Sainsburys! *(Come back Robert Maxwell, all is forgiven!)*

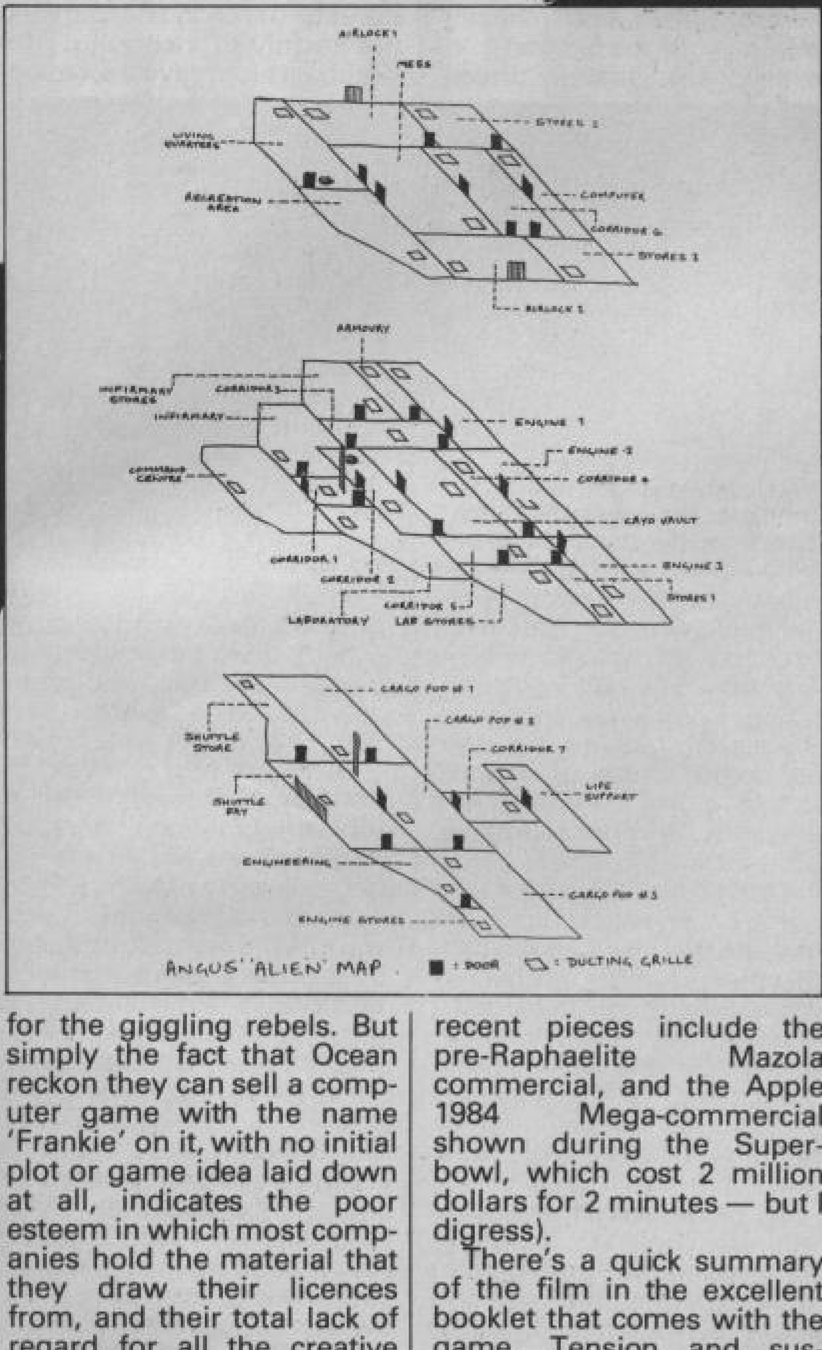
A CRASH Smash

ALIEN

Producer: **Argus Press Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£8.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Paul Clancey**

Alien is published under the 'Mind Games' heading, part of the Argus empire. For once, I can actually find it in me to say some nice things about one of their products. *Alien* is a very good game indeed, and a very faithful reproduction of the film to boot. It's always been the case until now that games licensed from films or TV have been marriages more of convenience than made in heaven — games like *The Fall Guy* tend to concentrate on a miniscule part of their subject matter and make it the major (in not the only) feature of the game. Even *Ghostbusters* really only used two of the subject ideas from the film, and it's been hailed as a masterpiece of thematic conversion. It makes me wonder really if software houses view name licences as anything except a licence to print loads of bread from the gullible viewing (and listening) public. I mean, what on earth are Ocean trying to do with *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*? I'd guess it will be a straightforward platform game with a few naughty bits thrown in

TLINE



for the giggling rebels. But simply the fact that Ocean reckon they can sell a computer game with the name 'Frankie' on it, with no initial plot or game idea laid down at all, indicates the poor esteem in which most companies hold the material that they draw their licences from, and their total lack of regard for all the creative work that went into the piece in the first place.

Thankfully, this is not the case with *Alien*. *Alien*, the game, has been written by fans, and it shows. Anyone who has seen the film will know that the situation gets incredibly tense once the hunt for the Alien gets under way in the ship (if you haven't seen the film, persuade someone with a video to get it out — it really is one of the best and most probable science-fiction films ever made; its director, Ridley Scott, has gone on to make 'Blade Runner', and is also very famous as a TV commercial director — recent pieces include the pre-Raphaelite Mazola commercial, and the Apple 1984 Mega-commercial shown during the Superbowl, which cost 2 million dollars for 2 minutes — but I digress).

There's a quick summary of the film in the excellent booklet that comes with the game. Tension and suspense are very difficult properties to convey in any medium, let alone the computer game, which gives you a quaint little flickering blob when you wanted a chainsaw, and a squeaky little note when you wanted a massive pipe organ blast! All the same, more reason to congratulate the author on succeeding so admirably in creating a tense environment in the game.

The action starts when the first member of the crew has just had his internal organs re-arranged by the Alien bursting out of his chest. The hunt is on for the beastie with the remaining crew members, one of which is an android whose aim is to keep the Alien alive, just to complicate matters.

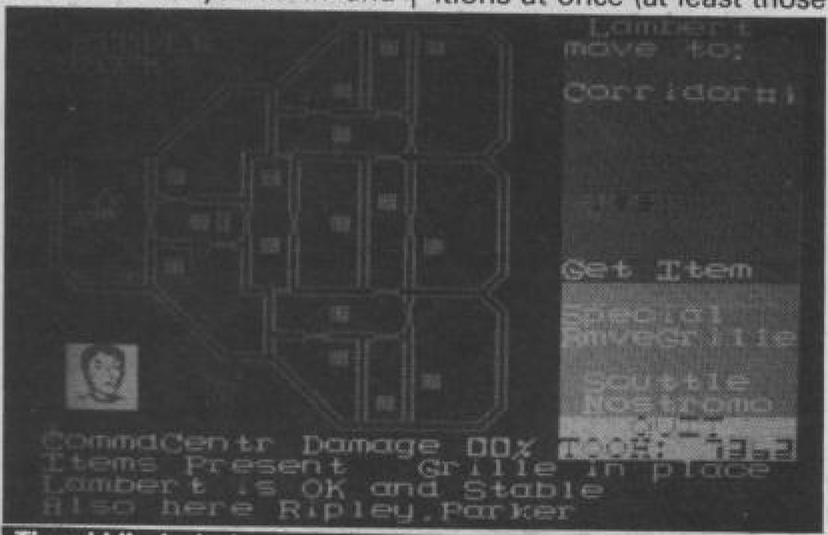
There are 35 different rooms on 3 decks to search; but the rooms are also connected by ducting which the Alien uses freely, but which most of the crew are loathe to enter. From what I can tell, there are basically two ways of destroying the Alien — it is possible to herd it into an airlock and then blast it out into space, or it is possible to leave the Alien on the ship, set the auto-destruct mechanism, and escape in the shuttle Narcissus, provided that you have Jones the cat, and no one is left alive on board the ship.

It soon became clear that my attempts to find the Alien were of secondary importance to my need to find the cat — and it was only after my third abortive encounter with the little scumbag that I sussed I had to have a cat box in order to catch him. By which time, of course, Ripley was the only person left on the ship and her morale was getting distinctly frayed ... another feature of the game is the way that the responses to orders are affected by the personality of the crew member, and how much they have had to suffer. I found that Parker the engineer remained confident and responsive right up until the Alien sneaked up behind him and bit his jugular out. Ripley, on the other hand, freaked out so much at the sight of a dead body that I had to take her halfway round the ship to avoid coming across any more. Not surprisingly, perhaps, my involvement with the characters in the game grew as the number of the crew dwindled (ie got chomped by the big A), and the game became more of a role-playing game than strategy/command game; until (because I'm not very good at it) there was only one character left, and I started identifying completely with that character; becoming first jumpy and then downright scared as I went into yet another no-exit storeroom hunt for Jones the cat.

When you're playing with the entire crew at your disposal, though, you do get quite the feel of being in overall command. I even felt at times as though I was on the ship, as the unseen commander. The screen shows you a plan of the deck

you are on, or the ducting in the immediate vicinity of anyone who is unlucky enough to be down there. You are given the menu of options to choose from — the main menu has the crew, to order individually, and the three deck plans. If you choose a crew member, your menu then changes, giving possible movements for that member, and other possibilites such as picking up weapons, entering the ducting and catching the cat (!) In particular situations, special options will appear — for example, starting the self-destruct system when in the command centre. The screen also displays reports on the condition of the crew member you've selected, whether there is any damage to the room you're in and

The sound effects helped to create suspense; the fact that you cannot see where the Alien is, but keep coming across evidence of its recent passage, and hearing it move around, adds to the atmosphere of groping around in the dark — again, a very faithful recreation of the film's feel. Because you know it's a real-time game, the little scrapes you hear (of doors and grilles being opened) and the blip from the tracker become vital aids to your strategic planning — which is a whole new area for sound effects. Of course, as with any computer game, there are bound to be irritating oversights in the program. I would personally have much preferred to have been able to see all the crew's positions at once (at least those



The middle deck plan from Argus Press Software's sci-fi horror game ALIEN. Somewhere in there the Big A is about to chomp an unlucky crew member

whether the Grille is open (important because it shows if the Alien has been there or not). You also get the occasional message from 'Mother', the ship's computer, telling you useful stuff, like the fact that while you have just been picking up the cat box one of your crew members has taken compulsory redundancy from the monster.

There are a lot of aspects to the game which I have not entirely come to grips with yet; like, for example, exactly how to work the 'trackers' and how many sensors 'Mother' has. I did, however, find it very useful to make a map of the ship; it's not really necessary because the ship is shown on the screen, but it does help a great deal in familiarising yourself with the layout of the ship, the names of the rooms etc. I found when I was playing that I rarely needed to check the location of rooms from the menu on-screen, which I think saved a lot of time — and speed is very important in a real-time game of this sort.

on a particular deck), and I found the menu selector system a little cumbersome to use — for example, I always seemed to select the wrong option and go back to the main menu just when I needed to do something really vital, like catching the cat. Surprisingly, though, the menus themselves are very well thought out, and I rarely found myself wishing I had more options available than were listed — with the exception that it would be useful to have been able to communicate directly between crew members. The 'special' option always seemed to cater for particular situations — a definite improvement on other fixed-input games such as *Lords of Midnight*.

Finally, *Alien* is a hard game to win at, I thought I'd done really well after a single two-hour game, to get one member of the crew off in the escape shuttle with the cat — but I scored 0%!

Overall verdict: an excellent game — should keep you going for weeks. Hitchcock would have loved it.

THE TRIPODS

Producer: **Red Shift**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£12.95**
Language: **BASIC with some machine code**

Interestingly enough, this month I had set things up to review just two 'heavyweight' games, both of which are menu driven.

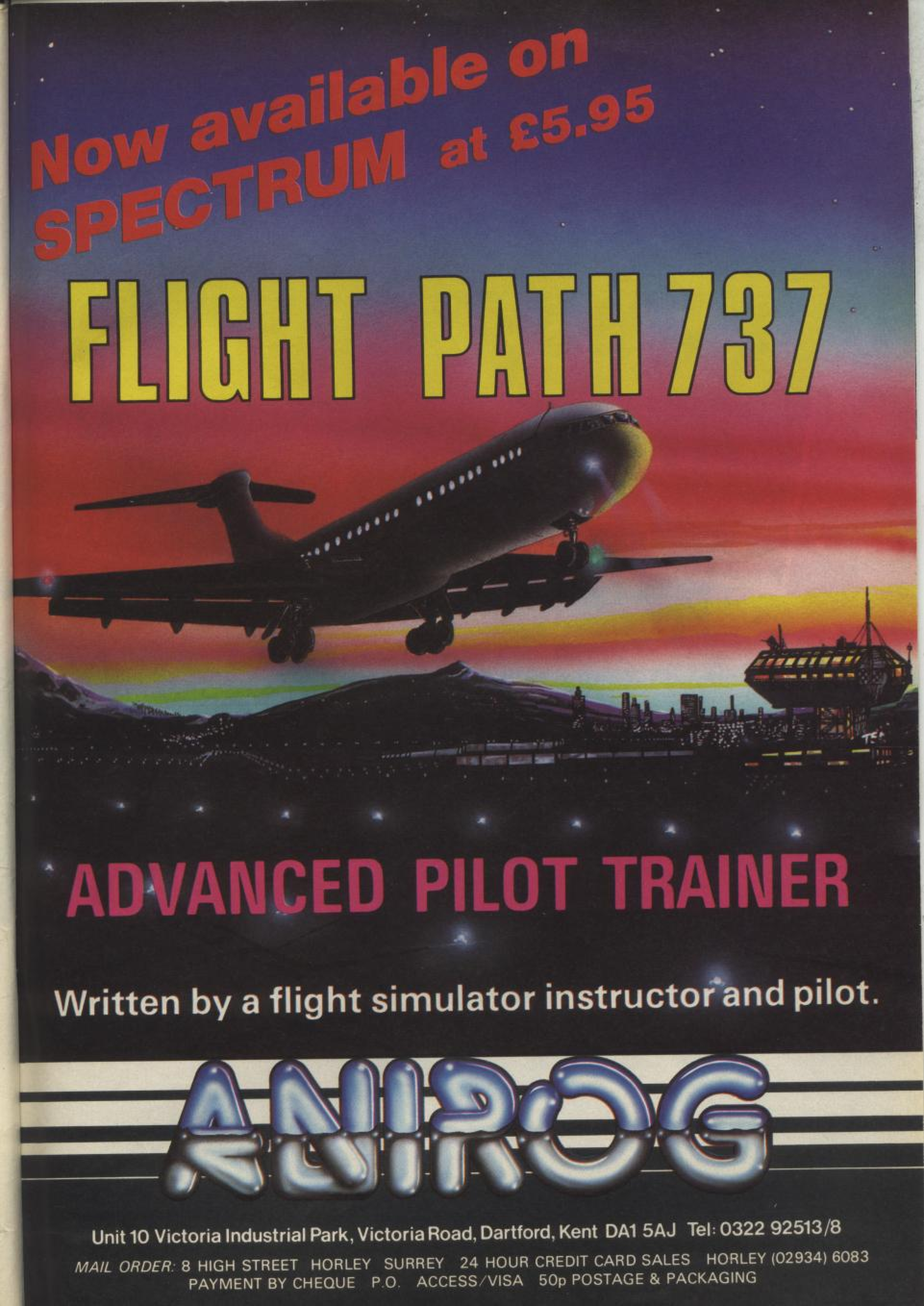


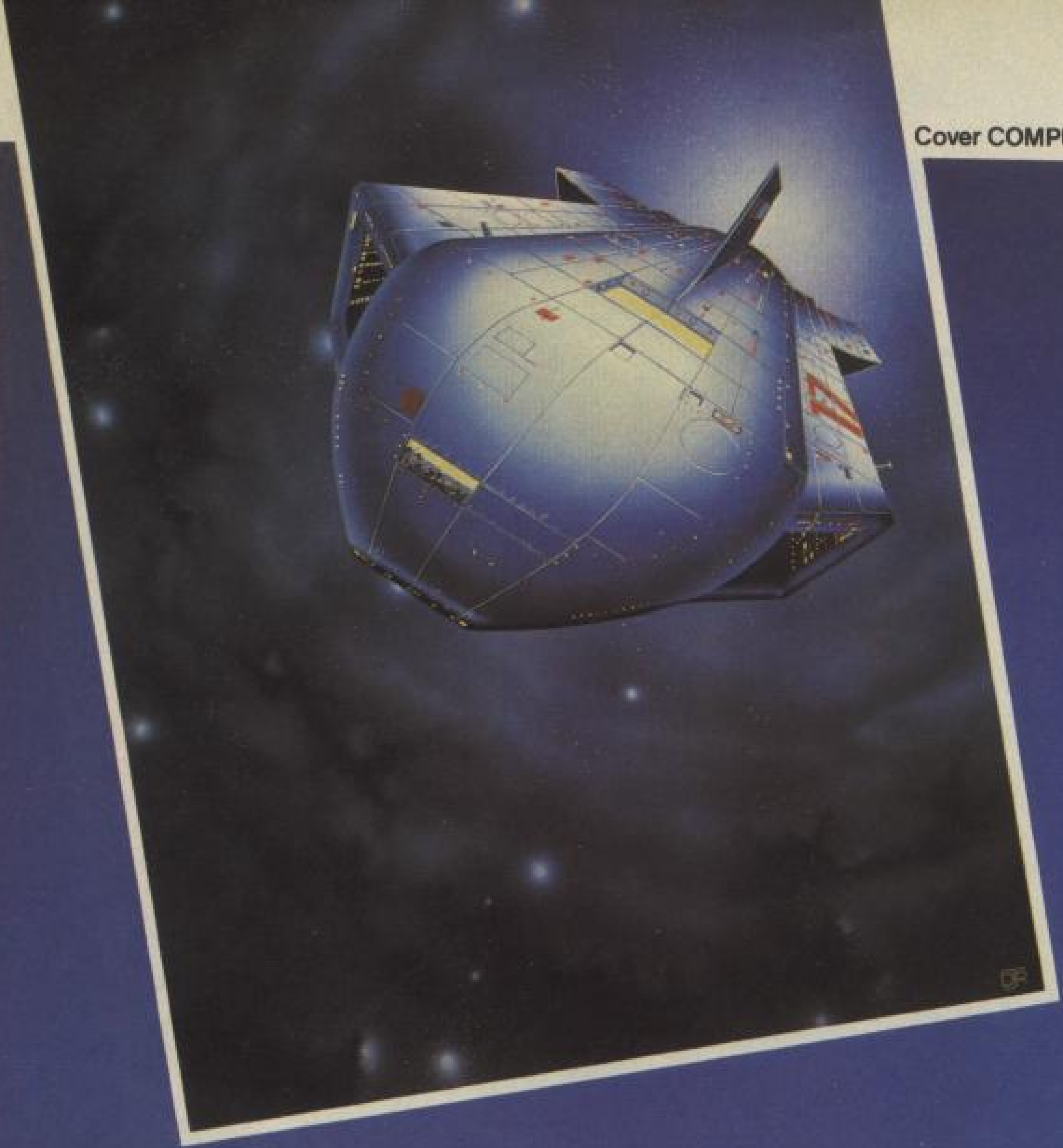
However, while *Alien* definitely lives up to, and even exceeds expectations, *The Tripods* does not. The packaging is nice (as indeed is *Alien*'s) and includes a large full-colour map of France, showing the various rivers and the White Mountains, your destination. But I began to have doubts about the game when I started reading the instruction booklet. It promised lots of interaction with NPCs (non-player characters) but said nothing about how this was going to take place. Not to worry, I thought, all will probably be revealed in the game itself. This did not transpire.

There is a basic menu, consisting of looking left or right, moving, eating and getting status reports on health and possessions. There are also options to pick up or not to pick up objects — you cannot drop objects. A special menu comes up when there are Tripods around — you can look left or right, move, or try to dazzle it, try to disorientate it, or examine your pack. Great, I thought, I just happened to have found a grenade lying around earlier, let's try and blow one of its legs off. But I was not able to get the pineapple out of my pack, let alone fragmentise the machine with it. This same problem seemed to apply to all sorts of other things as well — for example, there are shops dotted all over the place, and you carry money with you. Foolishly, I jumped to the conclusion that you would be able to go into these shops and buy things. Well, apparently you can't; perhaps you have to find a translator (a babel fish perhaps?) first, but there is nothing to give you a clue. While this is quite acceptable, indeed half the fun, in a text-interpretive adventure, in a ten input menu driven game, it seems obfuscatory to say the least.

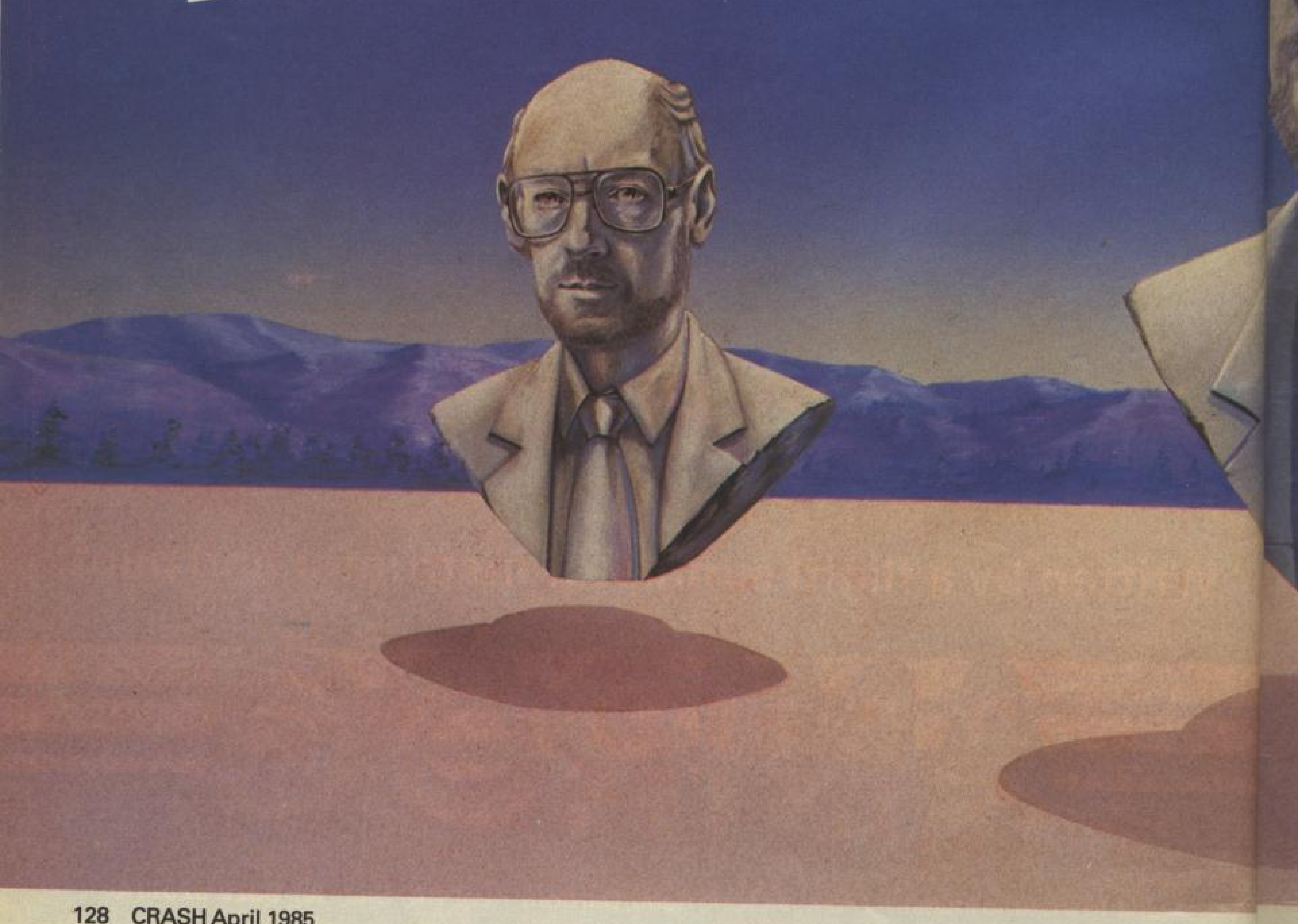
That you can't apparently do very much in the game is not its only shortcoming. The graphics also leave a lot to be desired. Red Shift have gone for their own 'landscaping' system, giving them (I would guess) several thousand views in the game. Each part of the picture is well drawn — there are four or five different kinds of trees, loads of different buildings, bridges, marshes and so on — but they are assembled to form pictures that throw perspective out of the window. There are also a series of graded lines drawn across the top of each picture, which I presume are intended to enhance the overall three-dimensional feel of the picture — I found them messy and irritating to look at. the drawing time of the pictures is not fast; and this is a complaint which applies to the whole game — response time is far too slow. Most of the game is written in BASIC, which means you get these tedious pauses between pressing a key and being able to do something else. And occasionally, for example when you come across a Tripod and need to move fast, these delays make effective gameplay impossible. I gather that *The Tripods* was going to be the game that would revive a rather ailing red Shift but I have the feeling that it may be their death warrant instead.

Overall verdict: However much you liked the TV series, don't buy this game. You'd be better off waiting for Ocean's *Frankie*.


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CHESSPLAYER - Quicksilva

ON THE COVER

We interviewed **DAVID ROWE** *while he was still trembling a little, fresh from the experience of being interviewed on TV about his latest work — the inlay artwork for the Soft Aid games compilation tape which has been produced to raise money for the Ethiopian Appeal. 'I'm the man who turns to Jelly on the Telly,' he stated — and his throat was still a bit dry!*

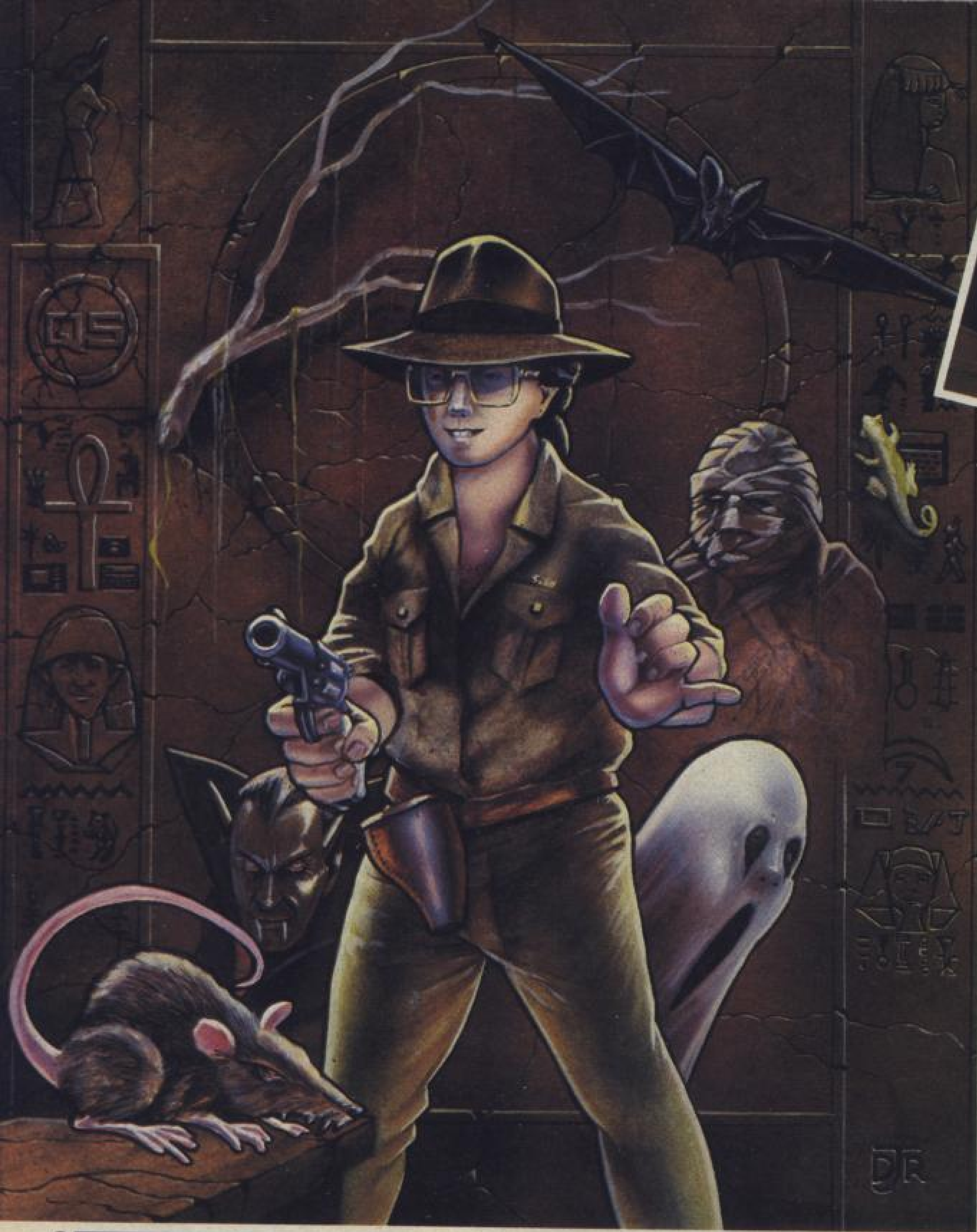
David Rowe *began his association with the software industry in the Autumn of 1982, when a friend of his, Nick Lambert, was setting up Quicksilva. Called in to do the cover artwork for* The Chess Player, *David rapidly became a mainstay of Quicksilva's Art Department and while remaining a freelance, has so far done over 50 cover illustrations for Quicksilva.*

But that is by no means all!

Between graduating from Brighton Polytechnic in 1975 and becoming involved in illustrating cover inlays, David worked as a 'jobbing artist', applying his skills as a draughtsman to the requirements of his clients — and apart from illustrating catalogues and brochures on commission, he spent a while doing acrylic portraits of people's pets. 'Grinding hard work,' is how he describes this phase of his career. And while he wind-cycled round the country lanes of Hampshire, partly propelled by the breeze catching the A1 portfolio he carried on his back, he set up deals with pubs by which he drew the boozer and sold a set of limited edition prints to the landlord, who then offered them for sale to his regulars.

David was in at the start as a software illustrator and he has painted the pictures which form the basis of a large number of book covers for firms such as Addison Wesley, Interface and Melbourne House — all for their computer-related titles as well as producing covers for magazines such as Acorn User *and* C&VG.

'The computer industry provides such a terrific medium to work in, and there's a great deal of allowance for personal expression — and the games almost demand an illustrator to incorporate a bit of fun and whimsy in his work. A commission from an advertising agency to, say, do an airbrush painting of a fridge can be soul-destroying — but you have to be professional,' he told us.



FRED - Quicksilva
Rod Cousens as Fred



ANT ATTACK - Quicksilva

He has been involved in producing computer graphics; using a sprite designer written by John Hollis he did the animation and graphics for Aquaplane. But he has no plans to get involved more deeply in this field — apart from a bit of hush-hush work currently underway for a top secret new Quicksilva project, his interest lies mainly in painting. His illustration for Sandy White's program Ant Attack went down well with the program's author, who is a sculptor as well as a programmer oddly enough. The first time David and Sandy met was at the launch of the game — but they got together as artists for the Zombie Zombie cover, by which hangs a tale....

Rather than draw an ant from memory, David went out and bought a second-hand microscope for £100, found an ant and did the drawing from life. Peering down a microscope with one eye and using the other one to do a drawing of what was on the slide was how he got involved with art! After studying Zoology, Botany and English at A level, he decided to 'become a hippy' for a couple of years (in the late sixties) before starting art school.

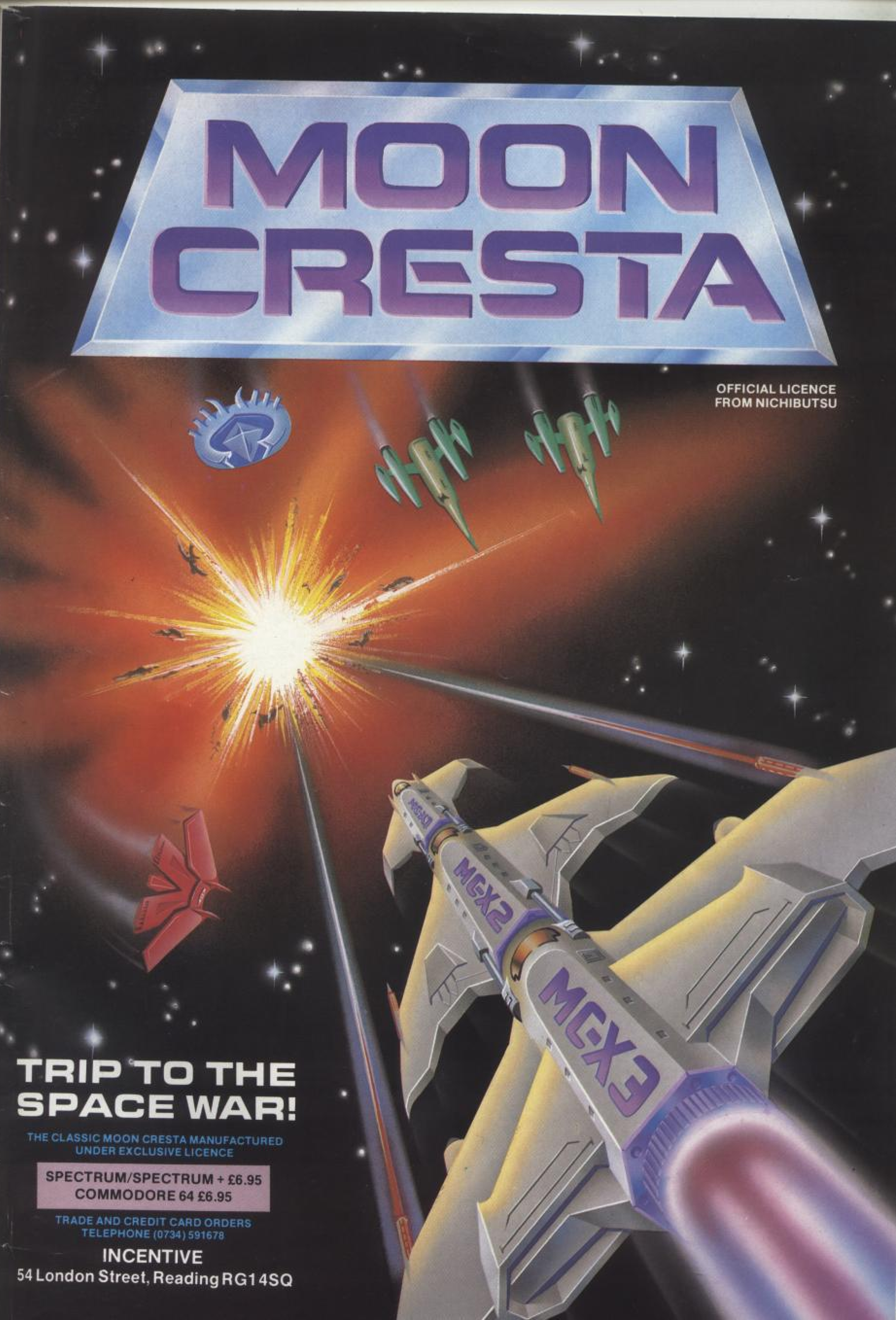
His current main project? Acting as co-ordinator to a team putting together a book which will use a large number of software artists' work — along the lines of the album cover books published by Paper Tiger (for whom David worked in the seventies). 'It seemed the logical thing to do,' he explained, 'there's an international market, and it can be sold everywhere that computers are sold, not just in bookshops.'

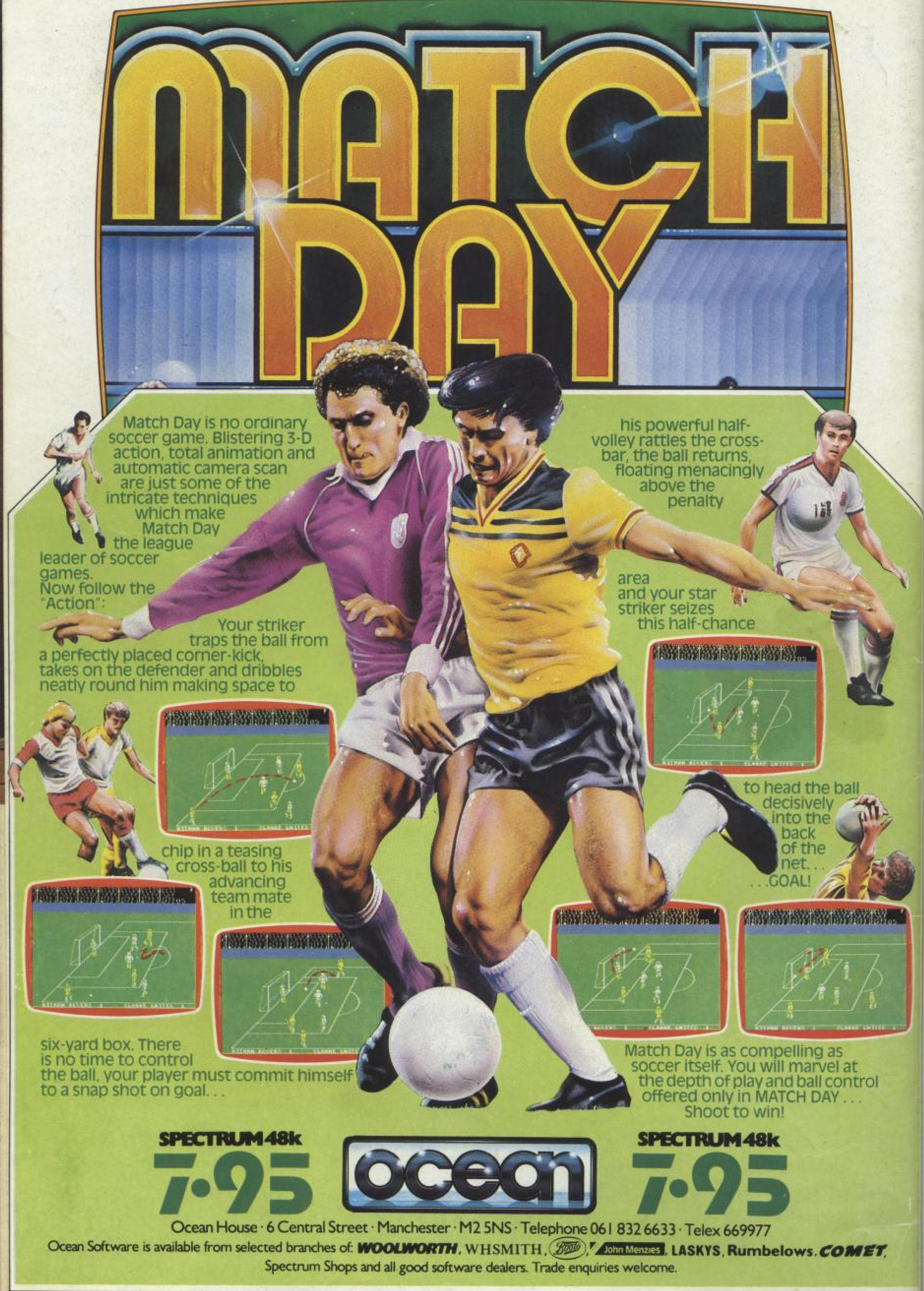
Not bad for a self-confessed ex-hippy, but has he sold out with his wife, two-point-four children, Ford Cortina and semi-detached home we asked. 'Wife, two children — and the dog's point-four I suppose; I've got a mortgage but it's a Ford Sierra,' he chuckled. 'I work from home, so it's a compromise, but largely on my terms — I'm not suffering from the daily grind.'

Lucky man.



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